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EPISCOPACY

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

GEORGE SALMON, D.D., F.R.S.

SOMETIME PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

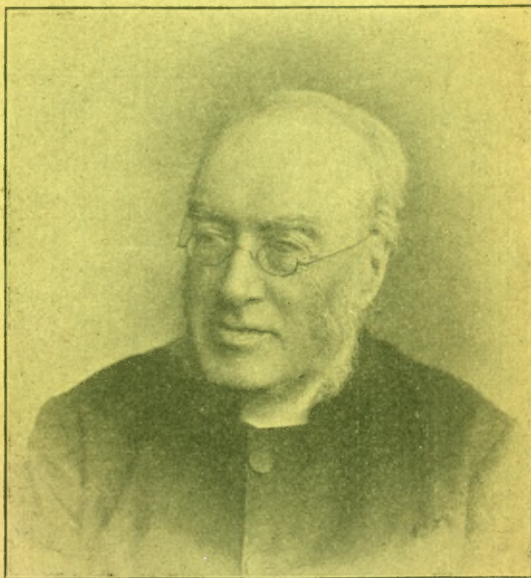


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SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE

1907

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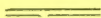
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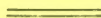
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PREFATORY NOTE.

IN a former volume, *Evolution and Other Papers*, some account was given of Dr. Salmon's life, of his eminence as a mathematician, and of his services to religion by his work in the region of Biblical criticism. As an enquirer into the truth or falsity of Christianity he possessed three needful qualifications in the highest degree; he had acquired an immense range of knowledge; he was endowed with an extraordinarily powerful and subtle intellect, and such was his honesty and his courage that he would shrink from no conclusions to which his investigations led him. That such a man should be a sincere believer in Christ was therefore a very great strength to many whose faith had been shaken by modern criticism and sceptical speculation.

In this volume some discussions on another class of subjects are offered to the reader. They are not concerned with the defences of Christianity from external attacks, but with the differences that prevail amongst Christians. Dr. Salmon was a loyal son of the Anglican Communion; he was convinced that her doctrines, organization, and uses were, in the main, right, and he was always ready to defend them with vigour and acumen, but never with the least breach of Christian charity. On the one side he fully believed that the Church, in the intention of her Founder, is a visible Society, that it was His wish that it should not consist of a number of independent units, however closely connected by bonds of friendship, like allied nations bound together by treaties, but should be a single entity, composed of National Branches, all loyal to the same doctrines, discipline, and laws, so far as these dealt with essentials, and officered by a ministry, whose Orders could be traced to the Apostles, and therefore to Christ Himself.

On the other hand, he held that each National Branch was, in the original idea, left free to legislate for itself in all non-essentials, and he warmly repudiated the claims of the Branch in any single city, such as Rome, to enforce her authority over the rest of the Christian world. In this controversy, which greatly occupied his thoughts, he produced in 1888 his masterly treatise, *The Infallibility of the*

Church, one of the most trenchant and brilliant polemics which Roman Catholic divines have ever had to answer in the long history of Rome's conflict with the rest of Christendom. And, as most of its readers surmised, few and feeble were the replies which it called forth, for indeed, so far as it goes—and it does not attempt to cover the whole ground—it is unanswerable. It possesses all the qualities that marked the author's other works, the critical sagacity, the rare felicity of language and of illustration, the caustic humour, the power of elucidating what other writers had rendered obscure or confused, and the strong common-sense, amounting to genius, which presented the writer's views in such a way that they almost compelled the reader's assent.

As regards the doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions concerning which the various forms of Dissent differ from the Church, Dr. Salmon treated of many of them in his lectures to Divinity students in the University of Dublin. It were much to be wished that they could be given to the public, but it is known that the author would not have desired that without his previous revision.

The Sermons in the present volume will, however, give a fair impression of the author's views and method of dealing with such topics.

THE HISTORIC CLAIMS OF EPISCOPACY.*

"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."—2 TIMOTHY ii. 2.

It has been customary with defenders of the Christian faith to challenge those who deny the fact of our Lord's Resurrection to say what they think of the men who first preached that doctrine. Were they deceivers or deceived? Could they have been innocently mistaken, or did they propagate a story which they knew not to be true? I do not know that any unbeliever now denies the perfect sincerity of the Apostolic preachers. Their writings that remain to us bear a stamp of strong conviction, which it is impossible to dispute. In this point of view, a special value attaches to the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul. These are not letters addressed to the outside public; they are the confidential communications that passed between the most successful preacher of the new religion and his chief assistants. Stories have been told of infidel priests of our religion in later times, who, when they were by themselves, made no secret of their unbelief, but boasted how gainful the fable had been to them. But we cannot seriously discuss the suggestion that worldly advantage could have prompted the exertions of Paul and his fellow-labourers. The

*Preached in St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, on St. Matthew's Day 1886, at the consecration of John Dowden D.D., Bishop of Edinburgh.

Christian missionary then had to look forward to loss of property, loss of liberty, loss of character. The letter from which the text is taken was written from prison, and Paul intimates that the sting of the imprisonment was that he suffered as an evil-doer: in other words, that in the eyes of all who did not know him well, he was regarded as a common malefactor, suffering the just punishment of his crimes. And he had no better prospect to offer his disciple. He tells him, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." He invites him to be "partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel"; he exhorts him to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ," and not to be ashamed of the suffering which the testimony would bring. Paul's support under his trials arose from the strength of his faith in the cause for which he cared more than for himself. He was bound, but he rejoices that "the word of God was not bound." "I am not ashamed," he says, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

You will easily understand, however, that in taking my text from this Epistle now, it was not my object to produce evidence of the strong faith which the Apostle Paul had in the Gospel which he preached. On an occasion like the present, it is to these Epistles the preacher naturally turns, whether his object is to treat of the theory of the Christian ministry, or to speak practically

of the dignity of the office, and of the responsibility and duties which it imposes. With respect to the theory of the Christian ministry, the Pastoral Epistles are particularly valuable, because they are the latest of Paul's Epistles. In studying the history of the first years of the Church, we might, perhaps, be at a loss to judge how much was to be regarded as exceptional, as special to the time when the Church was governed by apostles endowed with miraculous powers ; but these Epistles bring us down to the time when the apostle was, as he says, " now ready to be offered," and when the care of the Churches he had founded was to be handed over to the men of the second generation ; and they give evidence that several of what have been imagined to be later developments existed in Apostolic times. The aspect which these Epistles present of a fully organised Church, with gradations of officers, is enough to dispel the dreams of those who would have us believe that the whole institution of the Christian ministry is an unscriptural invasion of the rights of the laity, every one of whom, we do not deny, is bound to be a preacher of righteousness, and is entitled to regard himself as a priest unto God, fully authorised, without the intervention of any human mediator, to present his supplications before the mercy-seat of God. There are those who regard the mutual relations between Christians as only resembling that between the particles of a mass of gravel or sand, all of like

nature, but otherwise independent of each other ; or, if a comparison to inanimate objects be deemed inappropriate, like that between flowers in a bed, in proximity with each other, but each enjoying its own independent life ; or (if even this illustration be regarded as inadequate) like that between fellow-travellers who chance to be going the same road, all, no doubt, having the same goal in view, all willing to bestow kind and courteous help on the others, but in other respects completely independent of the rest, and without any pretensions to be regarded as a corporate body. I think this last illustration adequately represents a very popular view of the Christian Church, and you will see how very much it falls below the Apostolic illustration, which represents Christians as members of an organised body, all drawing their nourishment from a common source, but each member having its proper functions, and each in fullest sympathy with the others. When we once understand that the Scriptural conception of the Church is not that of an aggregate of particles identical in nature, like grains of sand, or flowers in a bed, but of an organised body, the parts of which have differentiated functions, there is no difficulty in receiving the doctrine that the Church is a corporate body, having its rulers and officers, and that there are some of its members to whom the special function is assigned of teaching and directing others.

In conformity with this is the whole Scripture history of the early Church. We are told of our

Lord's appointing twelve to be His first missionaries. But their work was not limited to what He sent them to perform in His lifetime. We find from the Acts, that after His death, they remained the rulers and governors of the society which He had formed. We find that they filled up a vacancy in their number. We are told that, in every Church which they founded, they appointed elders. These elders did not obtain their office by the natural right of being the oldest or the leading men of the community, but by a solemn ordination. St. Luke's words are: "They ordained them elders in every city, and having prayed, with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23). And now, in these Epistles, which give us almost our farewell view of the Apostolic Churches, we find that Timothy, who had been admitted to his office by a like solemn ordination, is commissioned to ordain in like manner a new series of elders.

There are three words in the text, the full force of which a hasty reader might overlook. Timothy, we know, was a convert and a disciple of Paul's. Paul calls him his "own son in the faith." He had, no doubt, fully instructed him in the doctrines of the faith. If there were no such thing as an organized Church, and if Paul were but the head of a school, like Plato or Aristotle, it would still be natural for him to wish, that one whom he had fully taught his doctrines should communicate them to a new

generation. This was the view of apostolic traditions taken by some early heretics. They thought that the apostles communicated their doctrines privately to their disciples, and these again to others ; and the Gnostic teachers professed to be in possession of these secret Apostolic traditions. But the Scriptures justify no such view. Whatever instruction Paul had privately given to Timothy—and, no doubt, he must have given much—he makes no reference to it here. What he reminds him of is the things he had heard “before many witnesses.” There are extremely many phrases common to the two Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus, such as to afford clear evidence that the three letters were written by the same person, and at no great distance of time from one another. One of these phrases is this, “before many witnesses.” We find it again in the first Epistle to Timothy (vi. 12), but there is a slightly different connection, so as to show that the one phrase is not a mere copy of the other. The first Epistle speaks of the good profession which Timothy had professed before many witnesses.* It is clear from the two passages that Paul is not reminding Timothy of any private instruction he had given him, but of a solemn ordination, in which Paul had, in the face of the Church, given him in charge the

*The definite article (“thou didst confess *the* good confession”) indicates that that to which Timothy professed his adherence was a statement of doctrine, well known and honoured among Christians.

doctrines which he was to teach ; and Timothy had equally, in the face of the Church, professed his belief in these doctrines. We find also, from two other passages (1 Tim. iv. 14 ; 2 Tim. i. 6), that hands were then solemnly laid on Timothy by Paul himself, and, as it would appear, by the presbyters of the Church also, and that, through that laying on of hands, a gift was communicated, not one to be enjoyed indolently, but which needed to be diligently exercised. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by putting on of my hands."

There are those who will readily acknowledge that an apostle was entitled to exercise authority over Churches, and especially over Churches which he had founded himself, and who would account for the authority exercised by Timothy by the supposition that Paul, during a temporary absence, delegated some of his authority to his disciple. But the whole of the Epistle leads us to regard Timothy, not as a private delegate of Paul, but as an officer of the Church, holding a post to which he had been publicly admitted by solemn rite, with the assent of the whole congregation.

But what was the office to which Timothy was thus solemnly appointed? Was it merely that of elder or presbyter? Two things show that it was something more. First, it appears to have been part of Timothy's office to receive and judge

of accusations against presbyters. St. Paul directs him to be cautious against regarding ill-attested rumours against an elder's character ; but if the charge be proved by the testimony of two or three witnesses, he is publicly to rebuke them that sin before all, in order that others also may fear (1 Tim. v. 19, 20). The second point is the responsibility that appears to be thrown on Timothy singly with regard to the ordination of new presbyters. The text speaks of the solemn charge in which he was to hand on to them the deposit of doctrine that had been committed to himself. An earlier chapter describes the qualifications which he is to require in those who were to be admitted to the ministerial office. Timothy is warned against committing the sacred charge to a novice untried in the faith. He is warned also against precipitancy in his choice. He must lay hands suddenly on no man (1 Tim. iii. 6 ; v. 22). In connection with these passages, we must consider what Paul says in the Epistle to Titus (i. 5) : " For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

If we had not Scripture evidence to the contrary, we might imagine that the presiding officers of the Church were developed by spontaneous generation in each Christian community. The little Society would, of course, need officers to conduct its affairs, and we might suppose that the Church would look out the most trusted of its

members, who would probably be, as the name implies, the elder, and that it would set these persons to rule over them. But the New Testament informs us that, however probable it may be that the voice of the Church was heard in selecting candidates for ordination, the ultimate appointment was made by a higher authority. In the Acts, it is the Apostolic missionaries who are related to have ordained elders in each Church; and in these Pastoral Epistles the ordination is described as made by men possessing authority derived from an apostle, but not apostles themselves. The office of rule over presbyters, held by Timothy, corresponds to that to which, in somewhat later times, the name bishop was appropriated; for in the earliest age of the Church that name had not this special signification, but appears to have been used as synonymous with elder or presbyter. But since we are concerned not with the name but the thing, there is full justification for what our Church asserts in the Preface to the Ordinal, that "it is evident unto all men diligently reading the Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the apostles' times there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church—bishops, priests, and deacons."

Some part of the Scripture evidence has been already touched on. This place would not be suitable for a discussion of what is said by ancient authors, but a few words on the subject may properly be said. Immediately after the

Apostolic times Church history, as it were, passes through a tunnel. There is bright light on the history as long as we have the New Testament to guide us, and there is bright light again when we come down to the copious Christian literature, which began to be plentiful towards the end of the second century. But there is a comparatively dark intervening period, of which we have but few records; for the generation that immediately succeeded the apostles does not seem to have included many men of literary ability, and the Church was then pressed by persecution, and eagerly looking forward to the second coming of their Lord. So it has happened that the greater part of the scanty literary remains of the sub-apostolic age is taken up with the controversy with heathenism and Judaism, and tells us little about the internal constitution of the Church. It is a great convenience to ingenious speculators to be unchecked by documentary evidence, and accordingly the attempt has been made to form a theory of Church government by disregarding the periods concerning which the evidence is copious and attending only to that dark period where the scantiness of the evidence puts little restraint on conjecture.* But it is a

*In writing this, I had in my mind Dr. Hatch's Bampton Lectures, the method of which is, in investigating the history of early Church organisation, to set aside not only the later evidence, but also that furnished by the New Testament writers (see p. 20). If it were not for this exclusion of evidence, it would have been impossible to maintain the paradox propounded in the second lecture

common experience with those who grope in dark chambers to come out covered with cobwebs, and I fear that no more complimentary epithet can be applied to speculations in which the best part of the evidence is systematically set aside. For those who desire to trace the history of Episcopacy during the feebly-illuminated period of Church history, materials are not wanting, especially now that the genuineness of the Ignatian Epistles has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of all competent critics ; but I desire now to keep completely clear of the region where conjecture has been allowed to enter, and to

that the primary signification of the name *ἐπίσκοπος* was the financial administrator of the funds of the community. It is true that as time went on, Christian liberality accumulated funds for religious and charitable uses, the custody and distribution of which formed a principal part of the bishop's cares. But for the primary signification of the word in the Christian society, we must look to the earliest instances of its use ; these are to be found in the New Testament, and there it is apparent that the name has reference mainly to the spiritual oversight of the flock over which the bishop has charge. In the qualifications for the office enumerated in the Pastoral Epistles, the power of teaching has a prominent part (see in particular Titus i. 9). In one of the first places where the word occurs, St. Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, he exhorts them "to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *ἐπισκόπους*," not to manage their finances irreproachably, but "to feed the Church of God, which He had purchased with His own blood." Similar inferences may be drawn from a parallel passage (1 Peter v. 2), and we need not doubt that it is the same officers who are described in Hebrews xiii. 17, as *ἡγούμενοι*, their duty being to watch for the souls of their flock as men who must give an account. And that shepherding was the primary function at the *ἐπίσκοπος* is evident from St. Peter's description of our Lord (ii. 25) as "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," a phrase which would have been ludicrous if it had conveyed to the minds of the apostle's readers the idea of a financial manager.

confine myself to the facts about which there can be no dispute.

Now, when Christian literature becomes plentiful towards the end of the second century, we find the attention of the Church chiefly occupied with controversy with the Gnostic heretics, who, as I have already said, claimed to have derived, by secret tradition from the apostles, doctrines unknown to the universal Church. Two ways of meeting them were employed. One was to point out the unreasonableness of the supposition that the apostles, when they taught the Church publicly, either did not then know the whole truth, or wilfully kept back part of it from their disciples. But there was another way, namely, to prove that whatever the apostles taught, secret or public, the Church had better means of knowing it than their heretical opponents. And, accordingly, historical proof was offered that the Church then must be in full possession of Apostolic tradition, because the bishops who then ruled it could trace their descent by direct succession from the apostles. It was with this object that pains were taken to trace the succession of bishops in the principal sees up to the very times when apostles founded them. I shall not trouble myself to discuss whether these ancient lists of bishops are completely trustworthy. It is sufficient for my purpose to say that when the Church comes out of the tunnel, of which I spoke, into the full light of history, we find bishops ruling everywhere, and no one

having the least suspicion that since the apostles' times any other form of Church government had prevailed.

Two things lead me to think that they were not wrong in their belief. If the original form of government had been different, I cannot think that a change would have been universal, or that it could be silent. There would surely be found in some places survivals of the primitive form, and other places where the primitive form had not been changed without a struggle. If dominating or exceptionally gifted men in some places set themselves above their fellows, this would not happen everywhere, and surely the usurpation would in some places be so resisted that we could not help hearing of it. The presumption that the Church of the second century was not mistaken in its belief in the Apostolic origin of an Institution, which in that early age had obtained universal and uncontested acceptance, is confirmed when we turn to the New Testament.* I will not repeat what I have said about Timothy and Titus. But there is one Church about which the New Testament tells us much—the Church of

*We use the very same argument in establishing the New Testament canon itself. It is only at the end of the second century that the evidence becomes copious and beyond dispute. It is the full light that then prevails, reflected back on the earlier evidence, which enables us to set aside all cavils. We urge that it is incredible that a change in the Church's opinion could take place silently and universally; and we refuse to believe that the books universally held in honour at the period of which I speak, could have then newly come into existence, or could be different from those held in honour in the generation before.

Jerusalem. And I do not think it can reasonably be disputed that the New Testament notices of that Church fully bear out the ancient tradition, that it was presided over by a single person, namely, St. James. Thus I consider that the assertion of the Prayer Book is entirely justified, that that threefold ministry, which we still employ, dates back from Apostolic times.

The Prayer Book does not say that Episcopacy is so essential that without it the being of a Church is impossible ; and I do not feel myself called on to go beyond what the Church has asserted. I own that there are some usages of the Apostolic Church which no Church at the present day observes ; and in matters where Scripture contains no express command, I will not undertake to limit the power of the Church, to modify its institutions so as to adapt them better to the changing conditions of successive ages. When this concession has been made, I do not think that there is much in what I have stated which learned and candid Presbyterians would be unwilling to grant. There was a time when the parity of presbyters was maintained as the sole permissible form of Church government, and when prelacy was denounced as an un-Christian usurpation. But I think such language is now only heard from unlearned persons who blindly repeat a traditional formula. Those Presbyterians who are entitled to be listened to with respect, rather take the line that Episcopacy is a form under which the constitution of the

Church developed itself in confessedly very early times; yet not by Divine command, but only through the natural shaping of circumstances, and therefore free to be altered as circumstances alter.

But it may be doubted whether the older school of Presbyterians had not the truer sense of the exigencies of their position. They felt that no light grounds could justify the breaking up the unity of the Church. If forms of Church government were really left by Scripture matters of indifference, they would be no adequate causes of separation. I have spoken already of the idea prevalent at the present day, that the unity of the Church is no more than that of fellow-travellers on the same road, who sufficiently show their community of interest by an occasional kindly word, or a friendly act now and then. But this certainly is not the Scriptural conception of the Church. And the popular notion that outward divisions do the Church no harm, is thoroughly refuted by experience. A machine is known to be a bad one, if, instead of its whole power going to do the work for which it was intended, the greater part of the power is spent in generating heat by friction between the component parts of the machine. Is not that a true picture of the actual history of the divided Church? How much of the energy that ought to have been spent on dispelling the ignorance and vice that is in the world has been expended by Christians in their mutual conflicts, one body

of Christians being as pleased to make a convert from another body of Christians as if they had made the truth come home to the heart of a heathen or an infidel ; and heathens and infidels themselves assigning as their reason for refusing to listen to the claims of Christianity, that if they thought of accepting them they should be at a loss in choosing between different bodies of Christians, all of whom agreed in teaching that a wrong choice would be nearly as perilous to their souls as if they remained in heathenism. The exaggeration of the importance of points of difference springs from a secret consciousness of the sinfulness of schism. I could easily raise a smile if I were to give you a list of causes for which Christian unity has been broken, many of the points of difference being such that to our ideas it seems absurd to imagine that they could justify schism. But at least the parties to the disputes represented these matters as important, and declared themselves to be animated by concern for the safety of souls endangered by the use of faulty ceremonial. That such matters should be represented as vital testifies, as I have said, to the unconscious feeling of the contending parties that unless the points of difference were vital, schism would not be justified.

But, in fact, to prove schism to be sinful, it is enough to show what injury it has done the Church. All God's laws are written deep in the constitution of nature. The moralist who sets himself to examine what things injure the human

body and injure human society, will find that the things which he is thus led to condemn are exactly the things which God's law pronounces to be sins. So that when we convince ourselves of the enormous impediments to the progress of Christianity which the divisions of Christians have caused, we may be sure that the rending Christ's body is a sin, even if Scripture had not directly told us so. Supposing, then, proof completely to fail that Episcopacy is Apostolic, or that it is binding on the Church for all time, it no more follows that what was for so many ages the established constitution of the Church could at pleasure be overthrown, than it follows, that if we abandon the doctrine of the divine right of kings, we assert the right of rebellion against our present Sovereign.

I am far from imagining that a schism can be healed the moment that thoughtful men have come to regret that it has ever taken place, or at least to see that whatever grounds there might have been for it in the past, the points of difference are not such as now to justify disunion. It is far easier to make a schism than to heal it again. So the wise man said, "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water : therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with." In the course of a long controversy things will be said and done on both sides which sound reason does not approve. Principles will be pushed to extremes ; strong assertions will be rashly made, tempting for the discomfiture of

opponents, and always most acceptable to the less educated of their own party, who are apt to care far more that an assertion should be strong than that it should be strictly true. And human passions arise : those who differ from us are apt to be regarded as enemies, and to be treated as such when opportunity arises.

I have neither time nor inclination to trace the history of the long struggle between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism in Scotland, to balance the account of wrongs mutually inflicted, or to determine which party has now most to forgive. But when the fathers have eaten sour grapes, it cannot be but that the children's teeth should be set on edge. Resentments have been stirred up which cannot easily be allayed, nor can the uneducated easily be taught to unlearn their old shibboleths. When thoughtful men are anxious to retire from untenable positions, the uneducated imagine that a cowardly surrender of truth has been made. For these reasons I do not venture to hope that anything immediate can be done in the way of healing of schisms. But not the less do I think that we may take hopeful augury for the future from the increasing desire of thoughtful men for greater unity among Christians, and their unwillingness to own obstacles to be insurmountable which were once thought to be so. For though the opinions of the learned may be slow to reach the masses, they do so at length, and what is mere scientific belief in one age becomes matter of popular education in the next. And with the

increasing pressure of unbelief producing assaults on every form of Christianity, men of what are now different denominations, forced to fight side by side against a common enemy, will, as they are brought to see how much more are the things they have in common than those on which they differ, be likely to feel increasing anxiety to put an end to existing separations.

But, it may be asked, If unity is so desirable, why should not we make a beginning by giving up our Episcopal form of government and accepting that which has been adopted by the majority in Scotland? I will not delay to point out how very short a way towards unity that step would bring us ; for we should still have to choose with which of the Presbyterian bodies in Scotland we should join ourselves. When once the breaking of church unity has come to be regarded as a light matter, further splits are likely to take place ; and so it has been in this country, on grounds which a stranger, as I am, cannot pretend to understand.

So much as this, however, I know, that some of these divisions have arisen from resistance to supposed encroachments of the State upon the prerogatives of the Church, and from the desire to assert the principle that the Church is no creation of the State, but must, in matters spiritual, hold its own way, whatever kings and parliaments may do. Those who hold that principle ought to be able to appreciate the historical reason for your holding fast to the old constitution

of the Church of Scotland. It is within the competence of the State to withdraw privileges from the Church ; it may take its property ; if it chooses to persecute, it may proscribe the public use of its worship, and make the assembling of its members penal ; but to alter the constitution of the Church is outside the province of king or parliament. What took place in Scotland in the reign of William III. has had its parallel in Ireland in our own time, though with some differences, characteristic of a modern change of feeling, more tender of the rights of individuals, less alive to the claims of religion. Our Irish Church has been disestablished, and our property taken from us : not, however, with the disregard shown in your case to the sufferings of the existing clergy. On the other hand, in your case, that which the piety of former generations had devoted to the service of God was still, in considerable measure, preserved for religious uses ; but in our case it was actually made a principle that no religious use should be made of our property—a feeling being prevalent in different religious bodies, like that of the harlot in King Solomon's time, of preferring that rather no one should have it, than that it should pass into the hands of a rival. But all these arrangements relate to secular matters. But suppose that Parliament had interfered with us in spiritual matters ; suppose it had decreed that we should give up our Episcopal form of government, I am sure that men of all religions, and men of no religion,

would allow that we should be right in considering such a decree as outside the competence of Parliament, and treating it with complete disregard. This was precisely the feeling of your clergy in the days of William III. The spoiling of their worldly goods they submitted to ; but the alteration by the State of the constitution of the Church they regarded as null and void.

But undoubtedly the repressive measures used had the effect of diminishing the numbers of the Church, and reducing its adherents for a time to what was then a very small minority, and still is a minority of the nation. Yet before you yield to the temptation of joining the larger number, look outside your own portion of this island, and see what a price you would have to pay, in the hope of gaining greater unity at home, by losing unity with that great body, whose ramifications are spread over all the civilised world, and of which you now boast to be a component part. If it be theoretically within the power of the Church to alter its form of government, yet that which is the common heritage of all ought not to be changed without the assent of all, nor without grave and weighty reasons.

Are there such reasons for parting with the Apostolic form of Church government? Is it the case that that form of government by single persons, which was natural in the days of Imperial Rome, has proved itself unsuited to our democratic times? Experience has proved the contrary ; there never was a time when the in-

stitution was more vigorous and more successful than at present. Our generation has seen the foundation of a number of Sees, both missionary and colonial ; and it has been found that with the gain of fresh and active leaders, Church life has taken new and vigorous growth. It must be remembered that these new Sees have all been founded by voluntary effort ; and since people are not fond of giving money where they get no adequate return, the fact that the stream of contributions for this purpose has not ceased to flow, shows that the donors are persuaded that what has been already devoted to this object has been well expended. I saw lately that what has been raised for the increase of the home Episcopate in England within the last few years exceeds £450,000.* And I can add testimony from Ireland. Since our disestablishment and disendowment, we are a poor Church, and have no money to throw away on needless luxuries. Yet this last year has witnessed the restoration and re-endowment, by voluntary effort, of one of ten Sees suppressed fifty years ago (Clogher). It is true that with the facilities of communication which the railroad system affords, a bishop can now take charge of a larger district than in former times, and therefore that a smaller number of bishops than in former days might well suffice us. But in this

*The sum raised by voluntary effort for the endowment of seven new English Sees is now (1899) close on £540,000.

particular case there was a large population of Church people who complained that under former arrangements they had not enjoyed adequate Episcopal supervision, and who were eager to have a bishop of their own. And they gave such practical proof of their eagerness by contributions for the purpose, that it was not possible to refuse to accede to their wishes.

There is nothing to wonder at in the advantages which experience shows attend our form of Church government. No matter how democratic a society may be, it must have its leaders ; and it always is when powerful men come to the front that the society makes progress. Presbyterianism in Scotland has had its leaders, several of whom—such as Chalmers, Guthrie, Macleod, Tulloch—have made their names known outside their own communion, and outside their own country. I suppose no bishop ever exercised more power than such a man as Chalmers exercised. The only difference, then, in our system is, that those who lead are given an official right to lead. It is, after all, comparatively few who can push themselves to the front by force of character, and can acquire the submission of their equals in rank by great superiority of natural gifts. Many a man, too, though competent for a higher post, yet, when the charge of a single church has been committed to him as his proper duty, feels that it would be presumption in him to undertake the charge of all the churches, and that in thus stepping out of his sphere he would be likely to

neglect the work that specially belonged to him. And yet such a man, when duly commissioned to undertake the larger oversight, and aided by the loyal co-operation of his former brethren, who now own him as a spiritual father, has often been found to be a more valuable guide and counsellor than men of more pushing nature and more brilliant powers.

Your late Bishop I had the honour of counting among my personal friends. I had known him by his University reputation, and by some of his published writings, when he paid us a visit in Ireland, and won for himself many friends by his mild and genial good sense. It is no light undertaking to succeed him, and to assume the responsibility of being one of the leaders of your Church along the paths which, in the unknown future, stretch before us. We are told that in the case of Timothy there were prophecies which went before to guide the Ephesian Church in their choice of a leader. We have now no such inspired guidance, and can only be directed in our choice by those indications of fitness which a previous career has afforded.

In the case of him whom you have chosen, a long and intimate acquaintance would enable me to speak of such auguries of success, if it were not that I prefer to speak of something better : I mean the gift which we are about to supplicate God's Spirit to grant, and which we doubt not will be bestowed by Him Who is ever more ready to give than we to ask. When we read of the

gift of God that was in Timothy by the laying on of hands, we might imagine that miraculous powers were spoken of. Yet surely when Timothy is directed to neglect not the gift that was in him, to stir it up, we cannot imagine that what was intended was that he was not to allow miraculous powers to decay for want of exercise. It is clear that the gift here spoken of was not one peculiar to one age of the Church, but one which is still bestowed in answer to believing prayer. I care not, therefore, to form an estimate of the human powers of the instrument with which God's work is to be done in this diocese. I look to Him through whose might weakness can be made strong. I doubt not that in answer to your prayers that very same gift which was bestowed on Timothy will rest on him who, by the laying on of hands, is to be entrusted with the superintendence of this Church; and if he doubts, as he well may, his own sufficiency for the task imposed on him, he may be assured that God's grace bestowed on him will not be in vain. One thought is enough to banish either timidity at the outset, or elation in success, or despondency at apparent failure—"Not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

THE NAME CHRISTIAN—I.

I THINK this remark may be counted a note of the early date of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The author of the book can remember the time when that which eventually became the recognised appellation of the believers in Jesus of Nazareth was but a local title current in only one city. Whether or not we are to identify the author with the Lucius of Cyrene, who, in the beginning of the 13th chapter, is enumerated as one of the prophets or teachers of the Church at Antioch, ecclesiastical tradition* appears to have had good reason for connecting the author of the Acts with that city. We may count it as a sign that he wrote from real knowledge of early facts, that he does not ascribe the evangelization of the city to any Apostle, although in quite early times St. Peter was claimed as the first bishop ; but the planting of the Gospel in the city is stated to have been the work of anonymous Jews of Cyprus and Cyrene, whom the persecution that followed the death of Stephen had driven from Jerusalem. St. Luke relates how Barnabas, himself a native of Cyprus, was sent by the Apostles from

* Eusebius, H. E., iv., 4. In Codex D, a "we" introduced at Acts xi. 27, is made to intimate that St. Luke was present at the prophesying of Agabus. The reading is recognised by St. Augustine "On the Sermon on the Mount," ii. 57, Vol. III., ii., 223.

Jerusalem to continue the work at Antioch which his countrymen had begun; he tells how Barnabas associated Paul with him in that labour, travelling to Tarsus to seek him out; he knows the names of the principal teachers of the Church at the time, names otherwise so obscure that they have left no mark in Church history; he gives Antioch the honour of the first organisation of missionary efforts among the Gentiles; and there, we may say, was held the first missionary meeting, when Paul and Barnabas returned from their circuit, and assembled the Church to hear the report of their successes. To that city Luke also ascribes the first Christian organisation of charitable collections for the relief of temporal distress, when, on learning the approach of famine afflicting the poorer Church of Jerusalem, they made a collection, and sent their leading members as the bearers of it. St. Luke also mentions Antioch as the place where originated those disputes which afterwards formed one of the earliest and, for the time it lasted, one of the hottest controversies of the Christian Church, that as to the obligation of the Gentiles to observe the Mosaic Law. The instances I have cited are enough to make it highly probable that the author of the Acts resided for some time at Antioch, and was well acquainted with the early history of the Church in that city; and therefore it is, as I have intimated, the most natural way of accounting for the remark in the text, that St.

Luke's memory went back to the time before the name Christian for the new sect had yet been invented.

The name speaks for itself as one which could only have originated when that new sect set itself to make converts among the Gentiles, and so when heathen were forced to take notice of the distinction between this and the other sects into which Judaism was divided, and to designate it by a name of their own. It need not be said that Christian was a name which Jews never would have given to the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. If the word implied no more than belief that a Christ, a Messiah, was to come, they were all Christians themselves; but an acknowledgment that Christ had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth was the very last thing that could be expected from them. Actually, the name Nazarene or Galilean was that which, in the times to which the Scripture records extend, they gave to the new heresy; and afterwards the name "Minim," which would seem to have been a general word for heretics, came to be appropriated to this form of dissent from the creed of the dominant class.* But as the name Christian did not originate with the Jews, so neither was it assumed by the disciples themselves. The words disciples, brethren, the faithful, the saints, were those which they used to designate the members of their own body.

* See Buxtorf's *Lexicon*, s.v.

So habitual did the use of them become, that the last word slips out from St. Paul when he is addressing Agrippa, a man who could not be supposed to ascribe sanctity or holiness to the members of the new community. And Paul tells him: "Many of the *saints* did I shut up in prison." When St. Luke had occasion to speak of Christianity or the Christian body, his ordinary name is "the way," an appellation the technical force of which is disguised in our translation, which generally renders it "this way." Thus, the object of Paul's journey to Damascus was, that if he found any of "the way," whether they were men or women, he might send them bound to Jerusalem (Acts ix. 2). And so, when making his defence on the Temple steps, he says: "I persecuted 'the way' unto the death." St. Paul's separating the disciples at Ephesus from the synagogue of unbelieving Jews is said to have been done because "divers were hardened and believed not, and spake evil of 'the way' before the multitude"; and later on, Paul tells Felix: "After 'the way' which they call heresy I worship the God of my fathers." But it is very intelligible that though neither the Jews nor the Christians needed a name to describe the new community, and though unbelieving Gentiles did not need a name as long as they confounded the believers in Jesus with other Jews, yet when the new sect began to make converts among the Gentiles, admitting proselytes without any burdensome preliminary

conditions, then those who did not join it were yet forced to take cognizance of it, and required a separate name to describe it by. As I have already said, Antioch was, according to St. Luke's account, the first city where a purely Gentile Church was founded, and so it is natural that there a name should first have been given. The Gentiles would hear the believers express their faith that Jesus was the Christ, and the name Christ would catch their ear as that of the founder of the new sect. The meaning of the word was not understood—indeed the word was almost universally pronounced *Chrestus*, and it was taken to be not an official title, but the proper name of Him whom the disciples honoured as their Lord. We habitually use the name in this way ourselves, and the usage is as early as the Apostolic epistles which have come down to us, in which, though the combination Jesus Christ is very common, the use of the name Jesus by itself is somewhat rare, and the name Christ is very frequently used instead, as if it were a proper name. St. James probably refers to this use of the word Christian when he says, "Do not rich men blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" Actually as most of you know, the word Christian occurs only in two other New Testament passages besides the text, and both times in connection with its use by heathen. The one is King Agrippa's well-known "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The other is St. Peter's admonition

to his flock, that none of them should suffer as a thief, or a murderer, or other malefactor, but not to be ashamed if any of them suffered as a Christian.

To suffer as a Christian was a phrase that had then a very definite meaning, for the name Christian became the ordinary title of accusation against the believers, and the unreasonableness of this was a topic much dwelt on by the early apologists.* They said, if there is any truth in the charges commonly brought against us, that we are a society connected by the practice of infamous vices, indict us for these. Accuse us of being murderers or incestuous, or guilty of whatever other wickedness we are said to practise, and if any such guilt can be established against any of us, we acknowledge it to be right that he should suffer; but it is unreasonable to punish a man to whose charge you can lay no other fault than that he is called by the name of Christian. What's in a name? If there be anything in a name, this name ought rather to count to the credit of those who bear it, since kind and good is what is meant by Chrestus. And they contended that the name Christian ought not to be disparaged, even if it might be true that it was sometimes disgraced by the unworthy conduct of some who bore it. In fact, the Christian apologists did not undertake the defence of heretical sects. What wickedness

* For instance, Justin Martyr (Apol. 4, 7).

they might or might not be guilty of they could not undertake to say, and they, in fact, thought it very possible that the calumnies concerning the Christians, which the heathen believed, were not pure invention, but had a foundation in some real misconduct of heretics. But they said, We ought not to be held accountable for the wrongdoing of people whom, though they call themselves Christians, we count unworthy of the name. The name philosopher, for instance, is a good name; yet it is assumed by many who are in no real sense lovers of wisdom. It embraces many who are quite at variance with each other, and it would be unfair, indeed, to make one answerable for another's doings, merely because they had this common name. Let the name Christian be treated like the name philosopher, as a name good in itself, but sometimes assumed by those who have no right to it. Let, therefore, the use of the name not be made a subject of praise or blame to any; but enquire into their deeds, and if the deeds of any are found worthy of punishment, punish them; but punish them because they are murderers, or robbers, or incestuous, not merely because they are called Christians.

This question as to the proper extension to be given to the name Christian, which we see was agitated as early as the second century, or perhaps earlier (for we read of it in some of the earliest Christian documents that have come down to us), may still be said to be an unsettled

one. Still the complaint is heard that many claim the name who have no right to it. As in the time of Justin, so still scandal is often caused to unbelievers by the misconduct of some whose life is unworthy of the holy name by which they profess to be called. Have we not heard of deeds of Europeans, it may be in isles of the Southern Seas, it may be in India, it may be in Mahometan countries, which have revolted the consciences of men whose creed we count less pure than ours; and what have we been able to say in order to dispel the scandal cast on our religion, except "These men who call themselves Christians are so only in name, not in reality. Their religion, if they would obey it, is holy, just, and good: their vices are their own."

In the second century the stricter discipline of the Church made it easier for Christians to disclaim connection with discreditable professors. If their vices were great and open—if their dissent from the creed of the Church passed certain limits—they were excluded from the communion of the Church, so that its members might reasonably object to being held responsible for the conduct of men from whom they had formally and publicly separated themselves. Even then, however, we can easily conceive that scandal may have been occasionally given by men who had not been cast out from the Church, and whose public misconduct first revealed that they did not deserve the name of Christian. In the present day no attempt is made in our own Church pub-

lily to separate any from its body, no matter what their vices, or how absolute their rejection of the Church's creed. Scarcely any of the bodies into which Christendom is divided aims at greater strictness: certainly none approaches the strictness of discipline with respect to moral conduct which was exercised in the primitive Church. And should a man be excommunicated by one body of professing Christians, he easily finds a home among others who claim an equal title to that holy name. For the days have passed when the name of Christian was one of reproach, and when acknowledgment of it could only be made at the risk of imprisonment, tortures, or death; now men cling to the name even after they have abandoned belief in every doctrine that was once regarded as distinctive of the religion; and there was felt to be a certain audacity in the act when a wide dissenter from the orthodox creed put the question the other day, Why should we call ourselves Christians?

It is natural in the case of a word which has long been so vaguely used, that no small difference of opinion would be likely to arise if we were now to attempt to define it more strictly. We should be equally likely to hear murmurs of dissent if we threw open the right to the name too freely, or if we guarded it too exclusively. Some, for instance, might ask, have we a right to give the name to Quakers and others who refuse to make that public profession and stipulation, and to receive that formal rite

of admission which from the earliest times was accounted that which gave a man a title to be called a member of the Christian Church. Others might ask, Can we at least give the name to a man who cannot sincerely make that profession which we know was always demanded from candidates for baptism, I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost? Can he be called a Christian who uses the name of Christ merely as the personal appellation of a man whom he does not believe to have held in the world's economy any office peculiar to himself; who looks on him as a man different from others neither in his birth nor in his death; as one who, partly perhaps, in consequence of injudicious language of his own, or, at any rate, through the strong affection and excited imaginations of his followers, was placed on a pinnacle to which he had no right, and came to be worshipped as a God?

There are others, again, who would not allow that a title to the name of Christian is conferred by the most orthodox creed, the most moral life, the strongest desire to be owned by Christ as one of His on the Judgment Day. They require, besides, a certain felt assurance that such shall hereafter certainly be their lot. Those who cannot tell of having experienced some such feeling they do not encourage to call or think themselves Christians, while they who can boast of these experiences are taught, in a land where nearly all call themselves Christians, to claim this title

as their special right, and enrol themselves as Christian young men, Christian conventions, and so forth.

I saw the other day in the report of one of the meetings of the last-named body, that it was thought a proper question to ask a child, Is your father a Christian?* The alternative contemplated not being that the subject of the enquiry was an avowed infidel, much less that he professed any different religion, nor do I suppose it was intended that the child should constitute himself the parent's judge, but the question was whether the parent himself claimed to be in a pre-eminent sense of the word a Christian.

You would feel that I had set myself a hard problem, and one not easily to be disposed of in the short time at my disposal, if I undertook to answer all the questions suggested by the remarks I have made, or to state and prove any compendious rule for deciding to whom the name of Christian might properly be given. I shall not attempt to propose any accurate definition of the word Christian, nor shall I venture to do more than make a few comments on the two opposite extremes, that of restricting very much the title to the use of the name, and that of

* "Is your father a Christian?" said a gentleman to a little boy on one occasion. "Yes, sir," said the little boy, "but I believe he has not worked at it lately."—*Dublin Daily Express*, Oct. 13, 1880. The report states that the answer was received with laughter, but it does not appear that either speaker or audience saw anything strange in the question.

throwing it open too widely. But as there seems more to be said than can be conveniently said now, I shall only speak now of the first extreme, that of undue restriction of the use of the name, leaving it to next Sunday to discuss whether all who wish to assume the name can fairly be conceded to have a title to it.

It must be admitted on all hands that a distinction between real and nominal Christians must be made. Our Lord Himself compared the Church which He was founding to a net cast into the sea, which gathered in of every kind, both bad and good. In another parable He compared it to a field of wheat with many tares growing in it, which could not safely be rooted up, and concerning which His direction was, let both grow together until the harvest. Another evangelist records another parable, in which He likens Himself to a vine, His disciples to the branches; but distinguishes these branches into two kinds, the fruitful and those which bear no fruit; the fate of the latter being to wither, be cut off, and cast into the fire. In conformity with this teaching, St. Paul exhorts his disciples not to rest content in any outward privileges, as if any of these were infallible and irreversible marks of God's favour. The Jews had their privileges like the Christian Church. All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea—all did eat the same spiritual food and drink the same spiritual drink—but with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in

the wilderness, wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. In a second epistle to the same Church, he will not permit his disciples to content themselves with the knowledge that they were recognized members of the Church, but says to them, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates." That all who call themselves Christians do not deserve the name, is implied by our Church in the words of the prayer which she puts into our mouths, "that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith, in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life"; that is to say, it is plainly implied that there are those who profess and call themselves Christians, who still need to be brought into the way of truth.

Admitting, then, the reality of this distinction between nominal and real Christians, if we desire to apply it, I suppose a very obvious rule is, severity in judging of ourselves, charity in judging of others. Yet in practice this rule is very often reversed. It often happens that men with the smallest possible amount of self-examination, relying solely on the confidence with which, in some moment of fervidly-excited feelings, they have been able to appropriate to themselves the promises of forgiveness of sins, pass a favourable verdict on themselves; and it is a principle with them, that that verdict must never after-

wards be re-examined. On the other hand, the name of Christian is denied to others, sometimes because they see no harm in amusements which their censors denounce as un-Christian, sometimes because, being by nature so constituted that in them the intellect predominates over the emotions, their religion, though satisfying their understanding and influencing their conduct, has laid no very strong hold on their feelings.

We can perceive that our Lord foresaw that in this matter His followers would be more severe than Himself, for His warning not to pull up the tares lest they should root up the wheat with them, shows that He foresaw that His followers would be likely to reject as tares what He Himself would acknowledge as wheat. Those who are thus more severe than Christ, adding to His commands requirements of their own devising, not only make the hearts sad of faithful servants of His whom He has not made sad, but often keep back others from enrolling themselves as His disciples. By making His service appear a hard one, His yoke a heavy one, they deter men from undertaking it: they teach them to regard the being His servants as a thing which may be put off to a distant time, and that meanwhile they may contentedly own themselves not Christians.

For the purposes of self-examination, there cannot be a better or more searching question than—Am I a Christian? Do I really walk worthy of the name, by which I should count it

a disgrace not to be called? Do I, in my heart, believe the things I profess to believe? That is to say, since acting is the real test of belief, do I act as if I believed them? Do those truths which I acknowledge influence my conduct? Do I, who call myself Christ's, set Christ ever before me, striving to be like Christ, aiming to do the things which please Christ, hoping to be ever with Him?

Useful as it is to put these questions to yourself, it might be very misleading to judge of others by the answers which they might venture to make to them. It need not be said how widely men differ from each other with respect to their willingness to take a sanguine view of their condition. It sometimes happens, too, that persons dishearten themselves by thinking it necessary to examine into the state of their feelings. I suppose no sensible person would perplex a child by asking it how much it loved its parents. It would be easy to ascertain whether it obeyed its parents; whether it liked to be with them; whether it was glad to do what would give them pleasure. But if you judged it by the account it might be able to give of its own feelings, a Goneril would be likely to be preferred to a Cordelia. Not so does He judge who seeth the heart; for, as there may be inarticulate prayer, which is not the less real because it knows not how to shape itself in words, so there may be love which, though never made the subject of conscious reflection, and which probably would

not gain in purity or intensity if it were so made, yet has proved its reality by its influence on the springs of action.

The worst consequence of harsh judgments of others is, as I already said, when we teach these others themselves to acquiesce in them. For what have we done then but teach them to disbelieve in the love of Christ? but made them think of Him, notwithstanding all the revelation of His love which the Gospels contain, as an austere master— one so exacting in His demands that, however real and great His claims on us, however great the advantages of entering His service, however awful the peril of refusing to join Him, still it is better to postpone doing so as long as possible, and trust that some time before death a convenient season will arrive for joining a Master whose rewards are all in the next world, while His yoke is intolerable in this? But the Gospel has been written in vain for any who can thus think of Christ. The message to the world which He preached in His life, and which He taught more effectually by His death, is that God is love. From Him every good gift comes; and He who spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, will not deny us any needful blessing. His commandments are not grievous. Obedience to them has the promise of blessing in this life as well as in that which is to come. If we feel in our heart any striving after good, from His spirit that godly motion comes. If we desire that it should be

cherished and increased, we may ask Him for a further outpouring of that Spirit with as much confidence as a hungry child asks his parent for food, knowing that he will not be refused. None that cometh to Him will be cast out. Among the blessings which His providence has already bestowed on you, not the least is that you have been already enrolled as disciples of Christ and as members of His Church. Draw back from your engagement if your maturer judgment condemns it; if you have discovered that the master in whose service you have been enlisted is unworthy of your reverence and your love. But if this cannot be said, halt not between two opinions; be in reality what you are in name; walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you were called.

II.

It is natural to us to think of the first generation of Christians, who had the privilege of being taught by inspired Apostles, and whose unworthy members were weeded out by persecution, as superior to the weaknesses which have disfigured the Church of later times. It is, perhaps, with a little of the self-complacency with which men see their supposed superiors brought down to their own level that we read that, even in the Apostolic Church, men extolled the merits of their respective teachers, set up one as a rival to another, and divided themselves into parties known each by its leader's name.

Though we hear it at first with some surprise, we have no difficulty in accepting the information that there were parties in the Corinthian Church known by the names of Paul, of Apollos, and of Peter; but commentators have puzzled themselves much to explain how there could be a party assuming the name of Christ's. How could that have been the distinctive title of any which surely must have been the common name of all? Some have hoped to cut the knot by a violent effort of exegesis, and imagine that in the last clause the Apostle speaks in his own person. Others may say, I am of Paul, and I am of Cephas, and I am of Apollos, but *I* am of Christ. However good the doctrine thus elicited, no candid interpreter will maintain that it really represents the true meaning of the words read as my text; and we have independent proof of the existence in the Church of Corinth of a party arrogating to themselves the exclusive name of Christ's, in St. Paul's remonstrance (2 Cor. x. 7), "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." I spoke on last Sunday of the extreme of over-narrowness in conceding this title of Christian. If any think himself aggrieved in having it denied him, he has at least the consolation of knowing that it is an affront which St. Paul himself had to bear, for that he was obliged to plead with a Church of his own founding, that he had as good a title as others to this name of Christian.

I. What exactly was the position taken up by this party at Corinth which called itself Christ's, it would be unprofitable to inquire. Some critics, who do not think it a hardship to be asked to make bricks without straw, have boldly undertaken to solve the problem, and though we have no source of information but the two verses that have been read to you, have disputed with each other as to the tenets of this Christ party, and its relations of friendship or hostility with the parties of Paul and Peter.* It is enough for us to note the line taken by St. Paul when he hears that a party had called itself by his name. He does not put himself at the head of his zealous adherents, and prove for their satisfaction how superior was his view of the Gospel to that of Peter or Apollos, who had been put forward as his rivals. He is shocked that Christians should call themselves by his name or by any name but one. "Was Paul crucified for you?" he cries, "or was it into Paul's name you were baptized?" Plainly, in his mind it was unfitting for Christians to call themselves by any other name than that of the Master who died for them, and to whose service at their baptism they had pledged themselves. The same line was often taken up afterwards by Church writers against heretics. These last were generally known each by the name of the first inventor of the peculiar tenets

* It was in an Essay on this Christ party that Baur, in 1831, first put forward his peculiar theory as to the true history of the Early Church.

of the sect. They were Basilidians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Carpocratians, and so forth.* The Orthodox, on the other hand, boasted that they had no other name than those of Christians and Catholics, the latter name surely as much abused as that of Christ was in the Church of Corinth, when it is narrowed down into the name of a sect.

And very prudently did the Church refuse to tie itself to the authority of any human teacher; for it is found by experience that such teachers can only retain their authority on condition of losing their personality. Their name may still ornament a standard or serve as a rallying-point

* See, for instance, Justin Martyr (*Trypho* 35). Similarly Adamantius, in his dialogue with a Marcionite (Origen, xvi., 264, Lommatzch), presses his opponent to become a Christian, and the dialogue proceeds:—

Mar. What: am I not a Christian?

Ad. How are you a Christian who do not even claim to bear the name; for you are not called a Christian, but a Marcionite.

Mar. But you are called Catholics; so you are not Christians either.

Ad. If we called ourselves after any man you would be right. But if we are merely so called from our being spread over the whole world, what harm is there in that?

Mar. Show me, then, that it is not lawful to be called after a man.

Ad. I will show you that it is not lawful to bear the name not only of a bishop, but even of an apostle. Which was the greater, Marcion or Paul?

Mar. Paul.

Ad. Listen, then, to Paul, etc.

Similar passages in Western writers are too numerous for quotation.

but it must not be too closely connected with the life and opinions of him who bore it. What Wesleyan now feels himself much troubled by researches into the history of the opinions of John Wesley? Does he think himself in any way bound to alter his own system of doctrine, when it is first brought to his knowledge that John Wesley started as a very high Churchman, that he retained to the last many of the notions with which he set out, and in particular a very deep sense of the unlawfulness and the evils of schism? His attachment now is to Wesleyanism, not to Wesley; and though it is gratifying to him to think as highly as possible of the founder of the system, and to believe that everything in the system, as it stands now, had, or would have had, his sanction, still he looks on these as questions however interesting only of speculative history; and it is to the system as it stands now, however it arose, that his practical allegiance is given.

And so it generally happens when a man of great energy and originality of mind succeeds in stamping new ideas on the minds of his contemporaries. Full of gratitude for the new light for which they are conscious of being indebted to him, they are not anxious to scrutinize very carefully blemishes in his character or errors in his system. Nay, it is well if they are satisfied with overlooking or condoning his faults, and do not make them subjects for imitation. Meanwhile, they press along the path into which their leader

has introduced them, and perhaps draw his principles out to consequences which he did not foresee, and would not have accepted. The spell of his name, however, still retains its power, and no very willing ear is given when first a colder criticism attempts to subject to exact measurement the services he has rendered and the obligations that are due to him. If in process of time those who call themselves by his name are forced to recognize shortcomings or errors in the teaching of him whom they profess to follow, it makes no difference to them now. The principles which had at first derived their vitality from the authority of another have now taken independent root, and are not killed by severance from the parent stem.

In the history of human progress, the greatest individuals count but for little. When children play along the shore, and build their fortifications and dig their trenches in face of the advancing tide, it is a triumph to the child who has most ably planned his engineering, and whose channels have let the water into his moats, while those of his competitors are still dry. But a few minutes more, and his superiority is effaced as the flowing wave, forcing admission alike to all, obliterates all distinctions. Our age has profited by the accumulated knowledge and experience of the ages which have preceded it. And looking back now on the men who did most service in teaching their own generation, we sometimes doubt whether, if they had not arisen,

other men would not have made the discovery for which the time was ripe. At any rate, we feel that we have a right to sit in judgment on the results obtained by men vastly superior in ability to ourselves; to hold fast to some of their conclusions, the soundness of which time has tested and acknowledged, and dismiss others as antiquated prejudices of a less enlightened age. The young man ceases to tremble at the schoolmaster from whose ferule he once withdrew his hand; the grown man criticizes as an equal the dicta of guides whom he once regarded as infallible, whom he still thinks of with gratitude, as the men who did most to stimulate his youthful thirst for knowledge, and of his former enthusiastic reverence for whom he knows that he has no cause to be ashamed.

So, as the world goes on, men like less and less to label themselves by the names of great teachers of bygone days. In the scientific world, the thing is almost unknown. While theories have still to struggle for their existence, and wrangling goes on as to their truth or falsity, they are known by their authors' names. So, while no school could drive its rivals off the field, there were Pythagoreans, and Platonists, and Aristotelians in former days; and there are Comtists and perhaps Darwinians now. But when once a theory obtains complete recognition, with its victory comes catholicity, and it has confidence that it rests on a better foundation than the authority of any name, however illustrious.

To tie itself to any such name might only retard its development, as we know that they who called themselves Newtonians allowed themselves to be outstripped in the race of discovery through too exclusive adherence to the methods by which their master had won his triumphs. Even in religious sects there is, I think, an increasing reluctance among men to fetter themselves by the authority of ancient teachers. I notice that several who hold the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic often prefer not to call themselves Calvinists, not desiring to make themselves responsible for all that Calvin may have said or done, and saying, with good reason, that they are prepared to follow Calvin only so far as they can see that he has followed a greater authority than he. If in these days the reputation is assailed by those ancient teachers of whom we think most highly, and whose memory we regard with most affection, it hurts our feelings more than it disturbs our intellectual convictions. It may pain us to hear our reformers spoken of as "unmitigated scoundrels"; but this we know, that if the worst could be proved that has ever been said of any, and if that which is true of some individuals could be shown to be true of any large numbers, still it touches not our faith. Our faith is not built on men. The foundations of our creed are not shaken, if history should prove that some Liberius or Honorius of ours has fallen into heresy, some Leo of ours sunk into practical heathenism, some Alexander outraged

morality. Let Cranmer or any other of those to whom we owe the casting off of a foreign yoke, have been time-serving, or vacillating, or inconsistent, or worse, we are not hurt as Protestants, any more than we are hurt as Christians, if we have to acknowledge that St. Peter at times betrayed cowardice, or vacillation, or inconsistency. In any case, we are Christians and Catholics, not Cranmerians. We follow men only as far as they follow truth; and in religious matters, what our Church has said of the most venerable assemblies of men, we say of the most venerable of individual men, that they may err and have erred, and that things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.

II. Thus, I think, at the present day, we are likely more and more to come to an agreement that it is not meet to say, I am of Paul, or of Cephas, or of Apollos. And now comes the question—Are we to carry our principles no further? Is it meet to say, I am of Christ? It is impossible to answer this question until we have first answered another—What think you of Christ?

That we must think of Him whom we know as Christ as one of the world's greatest benefactors all are agreed. It is certain that His influence rapidly outleaped the bounds of His own land, and that it has been in all the most civilized nations of the earth an immense power for good.

This is much to say; but if it be all, it is not reason enough why we, at so great a distance of time, should label ourselves by His name. Theories, as I have said, bear their authors' names as long as they are struggling for existence; but if we exclude those utterances ascribed to Jesus which speak of His own dignity, His doctrines are all acknowledged to be true by every theist. That we should admire and gratefully reverence His memory is natural, but why pay Him this exclusive homage? Why should we say, I am of Christ, any more than I am of Socrates? In placing the two names together, of course I would not be understood to say that, considered even as teachers of morality, the one is comparable to the other, either in the purity of the morality taught, or in the extent of influence obtained. But still the instance illustrates what I mean, that you would not dream now of enrolling yourselves as disciples of a teacher who lived two thousand years ago, however great your admiration for his character. Those two thousand years of accumulated experience have raised us to such a level that, dwarfs though we are, we can look down on giants who lived below. It is with a certain patronizing line of discrimination that we cull over the results of their labours, holding fast to that the excellence of which has been proved by trial, and rejecting what we believe they, if they had known as much as we, would also have been wise enough to reject. If a man of independent mind often refuses to make a

sacrifice of individual judgment involved in enrolling himself under a living party leader, notwithstanding the immense gain of practical power that party organization confers, why should we not retain our entire independence of any one who belongs completely to the past?

The conclusion to which these arguments point is, that anyone who believes our Lord to be mere man, so far from having any cause to complain if he is not called a Christian, ought himself to have no wish to be designated by that name. I spoke, however, on last Sunday of the mischiefs which follow from judging too harshly of others, and too lightly denying them a right to the Christian name. I had occasion to mention how early complaints were made that the name Christian was assumed by persons not properly entitled to it. Even in those days of persecution, when it was a common thing for men to be sent to execution, with no other crime laid to their charge than that they bore this name Christian—even then there were unworthy pretenders to it. And genuine Christians accounted for the evil fame that hung upon their name, by the wicked deeds of men who claimed that title only to dishonour it. It is not strange that unworthy pretenders to the name should be found in later times, when in place of the profession being forbidden by the laws, it was in many of the most civilized countries a punishable crime not to profess it; and when public opinion even outran the law, and to reject the title drew on the rebel heavier

penalties than the law could inflict, in the contempt and hatred of his countrymen. In our own country at the present day things have greatly altered, and disbelief in the most fundamental article of the established creed, proclaimed in the most offensive and aggressive manner, so far from being visited with legal penalties, does not even prevent a man from sitting as a member of the Legislature. And as a seat there had to be gained by the suffrages of a large constituency, it is plain that neither does public opinion affix any very severe stigma to the rejection of the first postulate of the Christian religion. Yet it would be untrue to say that public opinion is as yet completely indifferent in this matter. Its penalties may not be very severe, yet it is not to be denied that there is a certain coldness which the ostentatious rejection of Christianity may entail, and, consequently, that there is a temptation to cover secret rejection of the religion by a nominal profession.

Have we, then, a right to think, when men are eager to call themselves Christians, who, as we suppose ourselves to have proved, ought not in logical consistency to wish to call themselves so, that they are not sincere in their professed desire, and are only anxious to escape social ostracism by at least a nominal conformity with the prevalent belief. I am persuaded that it would be unjust so to think, and that at the bottom of their reluctance to part with the name of Christ there is a principle which it is quite worth while to

examine. We may say to them, You regard Christ only as a great moral and religious teacher, as one who, if He was not the first discoverer of certain great truths, at least succeeded in making them accepted in the world as they had never been accepted before. Why, then, cannot you hold these truths without speaking or thinking of Christ? Archimedes was a mathematical teacher of pre-eminent genius : we have incorporated his discoveries in our elementary teaching, and daily make use of them without speaking or thinking of Archimedes. Why should we deal different measure to a teacher of moral and religious truth? Why can we not believe and teach all the truths which Christ discovered without thinking or speaking of Christ?

III. When the question is proposed, we have at once an instinctive feeling that the Christian religion without Christ would be a nonentity. It never was so preached. Open up the New Testament at random, and if you find the work done by the first preachers of the religion spoken of by themselves, or others, it will not be said that they preached Christianity, but that they preached Christ. It was not so much a conviction of the truth of His doctrines as love to Himself that animated their missionary labours. And it was love to Him and gratitude for what He had done, quite as much as belief in what He said, which they tried to instil into their converts. So when St. Luke tells that the Apostles had been discharged from prison, rejoicing that they

had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, he adds, "Daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach 'Jesus Christ.' " St. Paul says, in one place, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord"; and more fully in another place, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Or perhaps an example from a later Epistle will better illustrate how completely "to preach Christ" had become the established phrase for propagating His religion:—"Some 'preach Christ' of envy and strife, and some also of good-will. The one 'preach Christ' of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then, notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, 'Christ is preached,' and I therein will rejoice." When we find that all the first Christian missionaries thus "preached Christ," it is, I think, unreasonable scepticism to deny that in His lifetime Christ preached Himself: that He uttered such words as "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me"; giving thus His own sanction to what His Apostle afterwards taught, "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

And if we look for the secret of the power of

the Gospel, whether as preached in ancient or in modern times, it is when Christ has been lifted up that He has drawn all men unto Him. Men have learned to know Jesus as the Gospel records reveal Him, as the lover of men, among whom He went about doing good; teaching, rebuking, comforting, dying for them; revealing to them what God is, not by words only, but in His spotless life; making atonement for their sins, and enabling them to look on the God whom they had offended, as a reconciled Father; reigning now in heaven at His right hand, the present Saviour of His Church, one to whom His people may fly for help in every time of need, who dwells in their hearts by faith, with whom they can hold intimate communion, and be always assured of His sympathy and love. And taught thus to think of Jesus as one living in the present, Christians feel towards Him as no one can feel towards any dead hero of the past. If I asked you, Do you love Socrates? you would have to stop and think whether the word love could with any propriety be used to designate the feelings with which we regard him. If I asked, Do you love Christ? thousands would answer without hesitation, and answer truly, Love Him? —I would die for Him.

Some early defenders of our religion appealed to the fact that the language of their opponents completely gave the lie to their professed belief, seeing that while they professed their belief in many gods, yet, in a number of phrases in daily

use, they spoke of God in the singular number, the soul thus bearing unconscious testimony to the truth implanted in it of the unity of God. Surely, with still better reason, we may appeal to the "testimony of the soul naturally Christian,"* in that there are so many now also whose language gives the lie to their professed belief, who profess to believe that Jesus was a man like others, who lived many ages ago, who is now dead and gone, and lives only in men's memories and in whatever abiding results have issued from His labours. But their anxiety to bear His name, their pain at hearing their right to it contested, shows that there are feelings in their hearts for which their theory will in no wise account.

It was a necessary condition of the success of Christ's work in the world that He should be able to inspire such love as He has done. Truths that require only intellectual assent may circulate and make their way with no need to be accompanied by any author's name; but any seeds of practical action which such truths contain lie dormant until they are quickened by the influence of human affection. To make any cause triumph and show itself a power in the world, there is needed passionate attachment to a great leader. In particular, religion, if it deserves the name, if it is to be anything more than a fetish charm for gaining the favour or appeasing the

*Tertullian, *Apol.* 17, and *De Test. Animae.*

anger of unseen powers, must be vivified by emotion; fear must be cast out by love. Far am I from saying that pure Theism is not capable of developing such emotions in the human breast. We need only take up the Book of Psalms to find evidence to the contrary. We find such utterances as—"Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but Thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever"; or, "O God, Thou art my God. Early will I seek Thee, in a barren and dry land, where no water is; for Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself. My lips shall praise Thee." And yet the feeling which such words express must be described as exceptional; rather that of higher and more thoughtful souls than of ordinary men. The Jewish history declares it so to be. No other nation had had presented to them so lofty a conception of Deity. They worshipped one uncreated Spirit, dwelling in light, which no mortal could approach, and of whom it was unlawful to attempt to make an image. But this conception was too abstract for popular acceptance. The people were constantly falling into idolatry—that is to say, striving, by some sensible representation, to satisfy their want of a God manifestly present among them.

Shall we say that the difficulties felt by the Jews of old sprang only from their imperfect civilization, and that with the progress of cultivation men find it easier to make the unseen the

object of love. Our experience tells us the reverse. As with men's increased study of inanimate nature, they know more of the order and regularity of the vast machine, they seem to become incapable of looking behind it, and recoil, as if from anthropomorphism, from the recognition of an author of nature to whom our love may be given. If there be a God, they say, He cannot be known. We can only smile at the alternative of Atheism which Agnostics offer us. We are permitted to believe that there may be a God, provided only we own that His omnipotence is limited in such a way that He is unable to reveal Himself to His creatures, and make them know and love Him. Others, recognizing that men have unmistakably aspirations and emotions which need a religion to satisfy them, have invited us to exchange our worship of a God whom we do not know, for a worship of man whom we do know; not, however, of an individual man, who must be acknowledged to have faults and imperfections which render him unworthy of our adoration, but of collective humanity. Such a religion may serve for the closet speculation of a so-called philosopher, but can never attract the hearts of mankind. Men have worshipped stocks and stones, but then it was because (however foolish their belief may have been) they supposed the object of their worship was a real being, with power to kill or injure them, and with consciousness of the adoration offered it. But who can worship a mere abstraction of his own mind,

destitute of any real personality, unable to know whether any one gives or withholds his worship?

But the inventors of the new religion of which I speak overlooked that the old religion which they forsook contained a much truer and more practical worship of humanity than theirs, in the worship of Jesus. Take the highest ideal of all that is most noble in humanity that any can form; tax your imagination to conceive all that is highest in purity and active goodness, and you will have formed no fancy portrait of impossible perfection, but only some sketch of what was actually realized in the life of Jesus. If you delight to let your thoughts dwell on such a model, you will not be indulging in unprofitable dreamings on a picture of your own imagination, not even in ideal reproduction of the historical past. It is permitted you to hold real communion with One whom, though He died, death could not hold; with One whom you may, if you will, find ever at hand to counsel and to help you; One who can turn your meditations on His goodness into a means of making you like Him; whom, if you really learn to know, you will not be able to help loving; nay, who will make you not merely like Him, but one with Him; so one with Him, that His riches shall supply your poverty, His strength support your weakness, His righteousness cover your sinfulness; so one with Him, that death shall no more be able to hold you than it held Him, and that where He reigns you shall dwell with Him for ever.

Men have obeyed a very natural impulse in enlisting themselves under human teachers, and saying, "I am of Paul, or of Cephas, or of Apollos." All that they mean the Christian means, but infinitely more, when he says, "I am of Christ."



SECURUS JUDICAT ORBIS TERRARUM.

“But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”—ACTS xxviii. 22.

THESE words, which we read in the second lesson for to-day, recall the memory of the time when the Christian Church did not possess some of those notes which now strike the imagination of men most forcibly—antiquity, extent, catholicity. In those days, when the Christian advocate found an audience willing to give him a patient hearing, the text shows how the words in which his address was invited implied that he had to encounter a formidable presumption against his case—“May we know what this *new* doctrine whereof thou speakest is;” “for thou bringest certain strange things to our ears.”

And the position which the Christian preacher had to assail was strong in the very points where he was weak. He seemed to undertake a hopeless task, when he proposed that her magnificence should be destroyed whom all Asia and *the world* worshipped. He seemed to undertake a hopeless task, when he endeavoured to substitute his upstart religion for beliefs whose origin was lost in immemorial antiquity. It might indeed be a matter of theoretical belief in the heathenworld that their gods had not always held sway—that there had been a time when Jupiter was still in private

station, and Juno yet a maiden, and when the infernal shades were ruled by no kings. But these tales of predecessors to the later dynasty of gods seem only invented to exalt the prowess of the conquerors by whom they had been overthrown, and to do greater honour to the existing deities by recording their achievements in times past. It is true, that in one memorable poem the new dynasty is represented as having dispossessed divinities more venerable, and more friendly to man—as exercising its triumph in all the insolence of lawless power—as doomed itself one day to tremble before a foe who could devise flame more piercing than the lightning, noise more terrible than the thunder. But it may be questioned whether this language is not used because it was so opposite to the belief of the hearers that, like the language put into the mouth of Satan in the “Paradise Lost,” it could not possibly be taken for a true representation of the facts. Where an English reader is chiefly struck by the exhibition of the power of an inflexible will to bid defiance to overpowering physical force, a Grecian hearer would see only unbridled insolence overtaken by just punishment. However this may be, assuredly such were never the popular conceptions of the gods. With the bulk of the heathen world, the gods were the supreme, the always-existing, whose worship had dated from a period far anterior to all historical record, and of whose dominion none could predict an end. But the heathen religion possessed the note of catholicity

in a higher degree than that of antiquity. All over the world, it was believed, substantially the same gods were worshipped, although it might be under different names, and although in different places a different order of precedence might be assigned to the divinities. When the Greeks first came into contact with the elder civilization of Egypt, they believed that they found there the same gods, and they persuaded themselves that it was thence they had derived much of their mythology. It is needless to say how completely the gods of Greece and Rome came to be identified, since it is in quite modern times, and with no small effort of thought, that scholars have been able to distinguish Here and Juno, Artemis and Diana, Hermes and Mercurius, Vulcan and Hephæstus. When the Romans came to be acquainted with the northern nations, they still made no question that their gods differed only in name from their own. Thus, Julius Cæsar reports that Mercurius was the god whom he found most in honour among the Gauls; that next to him were worshipped Apollo and Mars, Jupiter and Minerva; and that about these the Gauls held nearly the same opinions as all other nations. Tacitus equally finds among the Germans Mercurius, Hercules, Mars, and even Isis. And the traces which our language still exhibits of the times when Woden and Thor were worshipped, may remind us that Wednesday and Thursday were long accepted as the exact equivalent to dies Mercurii and dies Jovis. Thus then,

as I said, the first preachers of Christianity found their opponents urging against them the argument from the notes of antiquity, extent, and catholicity, with as much confidence as any body of Christians has ever pressed the same argument against a dissentient minority. The heathen might confidently affirm that that must be true which had been believed from times prior to all history, and among all nations : “ quod semper, quod ab omnibus, quod ubique.” If a sect which everywhere was spoken against dared to condemn the whole world, it would seem that argument was unnecessary, and that it would be enough to reply, “ *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*”

The subject which I wish to discuss to-day is, what is the exact value of these notes of extent and catholicity of which I have been speaking. Are numbers any test of truth? Can the opinion of a minority be safely rejected, simply because it is the opinion of a minority? If my object were merely to repel the argument from numbers as used against us by Roman Catholics in controversy, it would be hardly necessary to add anything to what has been said already. We have seen already that this weapon was once wielded by Pagans against Christians with infinitely more effect than it has ever been wielded by one sect of Christians against the rest ; and we shall presently show that the very same argument may be urged with equal force at the present day against the claims of Christianity to be the religion of the world. The early preachers of Christianity,

in fact, occupied the same position that was held by the Reformers three or four hundred years ago, namely, that of assailants of prevalent and long-standing superstitions. Consequently, it would be easy to quote from writings of early fathers passages in which they insist on the right of truth to prevail against any claims whatever made on the score of antiquity or general acceptance. They urged (the argument is Augustine's) that if antiquity might prevail against truth, then murderers, adulterers, and all wicked men might defend their crimes ; for these are ancient practices, and began at the beginning of the world : that the Devil himself is called *ὁ ἀρχαῖος* ; that ancient serpent, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. " Custom without truth," says Cyprian, " is but the antiquity of error." " Nobody," says Tertullian, " can prescribe against the truth ; neither space of times, nor the patronage of persons, nor the privileges of countries." It would seem, then, that both reason and authority would justify us in dismissing the argument from antiquity or from consent as utterly worthless. And yet undoubtedly we should mistake if we were to dismiss thus summarily an argument which has certainly some weight, and which has possessed and will possess with men higher influence than that to which it is justly entitled. For our opinions are influenced even more by our sympathies than by arguments. If an opinion be held by a number of persons whom we respect and like, then without any pro-

cess of reasoning to prove that we are right in deferring to their authority, that opinion will tend to become ours by natural assimilation. And we can easily imagine cases where we should pronounce a minority not entitled to a hearing, if it presumed to condemn a vastly larger body. I take as an example the occasion with reference to which the words were written which I have already quoted, "Securus judicat orbis terrarum." These words if severed, as they have been, from their context, and made into a general rule, would lead to the most absurd results ; but taken in their original connection, they are quite rational and consistent with good sense. The Donatists in Africa, as many of you know, had separated themselves from their brethren, on what was originally a merely personal question, namely, whether the conduct in time of persecution of certain priests and bishops had not unfitted them for high office in the Church. And when the Donatist excommunication of the persons alleged to be guilty found no ratification in the rest of the Christian world, these schismatics went on to maintain that the whole Christian world had profaned itself by communion with these unworthy members, whom it had failed to expel from its society. In opposition to such a notion, St. Augustine had no difficulty in showing the unreasonableness of condemning the whole Christian world, because it had not taken a decisive part in a controversy, respecting which it had but scanty information. Were Christians far apart from

Africa to be supposed to have forfeited their privileges, because they had not passed condemnation on men of whose crimes many of them had never heard, and of whose guilt they had no proof? If this were just, how could the African separatists tell whether they might not have forfeited their own privileges by a like remissness in not taking part in some controversy, raging perhaps in some distant part of the world, of which the Africans knew as little as the inhabitants of that part of the world knew of Africa. And he argues that the whole Christian world might safely refuse to accept the condemnation passed by the Donatists on their neighbours, when they saw the rashness with which they excommunicated distant nations who had committed no offence at all. It was a fixed principle, that it was better to endure the evil with patience, than to run the risk of condemning the good indiscriminately. And consequently the whole Christian world could decide with confidence, that those were not to be accounted good, whom they saw without reason excommunicating the rest of the world. This is a fair summary of St. Augustine's argument.* And we do not hesitate to apply the same rule in judging of those little sects, which in modern times have attempted to make in this life a complete separation between the evil and the good, and which maintain the Donatist principle, that that Church has forfeited

*Cont. Epist. Parmeniani iii. 24.

her privileges which fails to expel unworthy members from her communion. This principle is nearly incompatible with the existence of a Church at all. Such is the infirmity of human nature, that in a body believed to be wholly pure, the course of time invariably discovers impurities ; so then, by the operation of the rule that has been laid down, new separations and excommunications become necessary ; the Church of the pure reduces its numbers from hundreds to tens, and in some cases to units. In such cases the whole Christian world may surely, without examination, smile at the excommunication which has been passed upon it, and may confidently reject those who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others.

And we may carry the same principle further. If St. Augustine was right in refusing to listen to one small sect when it excommunicated the rest of Christendom (though, indeed, the word small can only be used comparatively, for the four hundred Donatist sees formed no inconsiderable fraction of the whole Christian Episcopate) no more is a large sect to be listened to when it excommunicates the rest of Christendom. The Roman Catholic body, though the largest and most united of the sects into which the Christian world has been broken up, is still decidedly less than the half of the whole, and we, like St. Augustine, may refuse to listen to them when they excommunicate a larger body than themselves. Thus I have shown that the argument

from numbers is one not to be summarily rejected as wholly worthless, but that it is one to which we ourselves on some occasions appeal.

And certainly this argument is one which practically is found to be most influential. It was through the operation of this argument that Rome gained some of the most distinguished of her recent converts from our Church. Anyone who will trace the history of that movement will find that the change in position of the men of whom I speak, was induced far less by processes of argument, than by a change of sympathies which resulted from their being brought into contact, either through the writings of antiquity, or through foreign travel, with Christians differing from the modern Anglican type. It is so much our nature that our opinions should be regulated by our sympathies, that it seems impossible for the assertors of the importance of a great and neglected principle, to preserve sympathy with those who deny it. And hence it would seem to be inevitable that there should be a certain narrowness in the sympathies of every great reformer. The most conspicuous example of this is the Jewish nation, which perhaps never could have fulfilled its mission as the apostle of monotheism in the world, if it had not been fenced off from contact with the surrounding idolatrous nations. It is needless to quote testimonies to the impression produced on heathens by Jewish exclusiveness, when we have St. Peter's acknowledgment—"Ye know how that it is an unlawful

thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." Now the reaction against Romish errors at the time of the Reformation entailed a similar intolerance on the part of those who cast off the Papal yoke. They felt that the distance between them and Rome could not be made too wide. Rites or institutions, innocent in themselves, and even venerable for their age, were cast off as polluted, if they were identified in their minds with Rome. They were reluctant to acknowledge that Rome retained any fragments of their common Christianity. Their spirit was expressed in the deprecation in the Litany of our first reformed Prayer Book—"From the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities, Good Lord, deliver us." And though, in the process of time, the opposition to Rome lost some of its bitterness, still the questions at issue between us and Rome were felt to be of importance surpassing that of all others. Consequently, those writers who lived before these questions were agitated, and who, therefore, spoke ambiguously on them, or who could be claimed on the wrong side of them, were regarded with distrust. While the champions of our Church never abandoned the attempt to prove that antiquity is really on our side, the feeling of the majority was that "to the martyrs and confessors, to whom we owe the Reformation, greater reverence is due than to any guides which the Church has had since the Apostles"; and that if we can trace our religious principles to

them, "we trace them to the only human parentage we need be very solicitous to establish for them." In this neglect of antiquity, it came to many as a startling novelty, when the publication of Milner's "Church History" made known to them that Ambrose and Augustine and Chrysostom were Christians who loved the same Bible as themselves, and who had learned from it to feed their spiritual life on the same Gospel truths. Dr. Newman tells us that it was from this work, the product of the Evangelical School, that he himself was early fired with the love of the ancient Church. Thence he was led to take an interest in studies which familiarized him with a type of Christianity different from that which his boyhood had venerated. And as his acute and sceptical intellect was ever subjugated by his lively and credulous imagination, his views on modern controversies came to be governed by uncertain analogies suggested by the history of the early Church. What, if the isolated religious position of England were but the reproduction of that of the African Donatists of old, severed from the whole Christian world. More and more these words haunted his imagination—"Securus judicat orbis terrarum." At length he resolved to cast off his allegiance to the most venerable names that were enthroned in honour by a single island, if it were incompatible with his veneration of those who were held in honour all over the earth. "Perish," he exclaimed, "perish a whole tribe of Cranmers, Riddleys, Latimers, and Jewels ;

perish the names of Bramhall, Usher, Taylor, Stillingfleet, and Barrow, from the face of the earth, ere I should do aught but fall at their feet in love and in worship, whose image was continually before my eyes, and whose musical words were ever in my ears and on my tongue."

The same effect that was produced in this case by the study of antiquity, has been produced in others by foreign travel. The peculiar circumstances of our Reformation isolated England as well from the reformed as from the unreformed on the Continent. And while there was little intercourse with foreign Christians, the isolation was not felt as a hardship. We rather prided ourselves on being the only Church which had combined apostolic order with apostolic purity of doctrine. But it often happened to those who were brought into closer contact with Christians abroad, to be forced to recognize that there were among them men who sincerely loved Christ, and devotedly worked for Him, and thus to be more struck with the points of likeness between us and them, than by our points of difference. Then it was felt to be painful and grievous that there should be schism between us ; and the mistake was made of imputing the fault of that schism to our rejection of mediæval novelties, and to our resistance to Papal usurpations, and of overlooking that, in truth, the Papal usurpations were the real impediment to unity ; and so attempts were made to re-impose on us a yoke, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.

However successful the argument from Catholicity may have been in gaining some converts for Rome, it will be found that this is not the use of the argument which is really most formidable. In this case, as in many others, the arguments used by Dr. Newman against Anglicanism are really arguments against Christianity. Exactly in the same way as some have made the comparative smallness of the number of the members of our Church a reason for not examining into her claim to conformity of doctrine with apostolic times, so have the claims of Christianity herself been set aside by those who have been forced to take notice how far it is, even at the present day, from being the religion of the world. Just as in the history of the contest between Anglicanism and Romanism, so in the history of the contest between Christianity and non-Christianity, a change of feeling has taken place, first through the influence of literature, next through that of foreign travel. There was a long time during which Christians, knowing and caring little about all who lay outside their own pale, were content to think of the whole heathen world as lying in un-mixed wickedness. A great change of feeling took place when, in the revival of learning, heathen poets and philosophers came to be the favourite teachers of Christians. Not to speak of many who were half paganized, even the most orthodox could not think harshly of those "whose musical words were ever in their ears and on their tongue."

Thus, though Dante denies to the bulk of the heathen sages admission into heaven, he makes their position in limbo one of such dignity and honour, that one of his commentators exclaims, that his author is more courteous to poets who were not Christians, than he is to saints who were not Ghibellines. He gladly adopts the legend, that the emperor Trajan had found through the prayers of Pope Gregory admission into paradise. On his own authority, he makes the poet Statius to have been a secret convert to Christianity ; and he gives a place in paradise beside David and Hezekiah to that Trojan prince whom his favourite poet had described as "justissimus unus," "et servantissimus æqui."

In our own days, increased intercourse with non-Christian peoples has inclined many to judge of them more favourably. A European lady spends months in the midst of Mahometans, and finds them pious, courteous, and even tolerant. Lessons of genuine piety and faith in God are quoted from the religious works of men who never heard of Pentateuch or Bible. In nations which know not Christ are found men who seem to be fearing God, and working righteousness. Then arises the question, Can the exclusive claims of Christianity be maintained? Is it more than one of the forms in which the religious conceptions of men have embodied themselves? Do we well when we try to force our European forms of thought on Oriental minds, to which they are alien? Have we realized in thought the vast mul-

titudes of millions of our fellow-creatures, to whom our creeds are unknown, or who have refused to receive them? The number of those in communion with Rome does not bear so high a proportion to the whole of Christendom, as that of those outside of Christianity does to the entire population of the world. So that if Rome can silence opposition by an appeal to the number of her adherents, with far better right can those who reject Christianity bar her exclusive claims with the maxim, "*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*"

The purport of what has been hitherto said has been but to illustrate the importance of the subject proposed for discussion. To treat that question fully would be impossible in the time that now remains to me, and I can only attempt briefly to indicate the principles that may guide us in the solution of it. And in the first place, it must be acknowledged by all that numbers are no test of truth. Of almost all the truths that are now accounted most valuable, there was a time when everywhere they were spoken against. The greatest discoveries have had to force their way against long opposition. What we hold to be most certain truths, must be rejected if their reception is to depend on the length of time for which they have been admitted, or on the universality of their acknowledgment. It is our universal belief now that the apparent motion of the heavenly bodies is caused by a real motion of the earth, but that belief is only of three or four cen-

turies' standing : the doctrine, when first propounded, encountered violent opposition, and doubtless at the present day the number of those who hold it is but a small fraction of the population of the earth. If it be true that nothing is harder than to resist the sympathetic influence of the opinions of the multitude among which we live, on the other hand, men feel that their highest honours are due to those heroic souls who are able to resist that influence ; to an Athanasius contra mundum ; to an Elijah maintaining the cause of Jehovah single-handed against an apostate nation ; to him with whom, as with Abdiel, " nor number nor example wrought to swerve from truth, nor change his constant mind though single." We find, then, that it is no presumption against the truth of any doctrine that it was long overlooked ; that when discovered, it met with violent opposition ; that it had to force its way to acceptance by long and severe struggles ; that at the present day it is far from being universally admitted by mankind.

But it is a presumption against a doctrine if it shows no *tendency* to gain this victory. We have faith that that which is true will ultimately prevail. If we see what we regard as error now reigning widely, we can believe that its dominion will not be lasting, if we can trace the causes which give it currency ; and if we can see that with increase of light the half truths now misapprehended must be discerned in their full proportions.

With respect to Christianity, then, we must own that the success of her missionary efforts is the criterion of her Divine origin. But the question by which she must be tested is not what progress has she already made in the world, but whether her capacities for progress are exhausted. And surely, if we compare what she is now with what she was at the time to which the text refers, *then* everywhere spoken against, the superstition of a handful of despised men ; *now* triumphant over those parts of the earth which are foremost in civilization, in expansive power, and in all the arts of progress, we shall feel it to be rash to assert that she cannot gain greater victories now in her mature strength than she formerly did in her infancy. It is true that much remains to be done before she can be owned as supreme over all the earth. Triumphant over Europe, and over those countries which have been colonized from Europe, she has still arrayed against her millions of the eastern world. But we need not think of Christianity as a product of western forms of thought, alien to eastern minds. Christianity herself is a daughter of the East. One of the first things that strikes western travellers to oriental lands is the existence there, at the present day, of manners and customs with which our sacred books have made us familiar ; so that the victory which our religion has gained on a continent to which she was a stranger is an argument *a fortiori* that she is not incapable of gaining a like victory in the land of her birth.

Nor is it an argument against her that some of the truths which she comes to teach have been owned where she has not been ; that heathens should have spoken of the fatherhood of God, the consciousness of sin, the fear of retribution, the hope of immortality. Nay, rather we ought to hail with gladness and hope those signs of preparedness to receive her lessons. When a conflagration is spreading over some vast prairie, it is no sign that its force is exhausted if tongues of flame are seen to dart forward in advance of the line of fire, and ever and anon patches kindle up where the conflagration has not yet reached. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, when addressing an heathen audience, did not seek to disparage the knowledge they had already attained. He rather sought to make that knowledge a basis for his own instructions : " Certain of your own poets have said, For we also are His offspring " ; " whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." He admits that " that which may be known of God is manifest even in the heathen : " that " the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." And it will be our wisdom in like manner to avail ourselves of any element of truth or goodness that can be found in the heathen world. These are too few, too scattered, too little able to propagate themselves, to cause any jealousy to the champions of Christianity. The moral and spiritual condition of no pagan land is such as to allow us

to imagine that it stands in no need of a Revelation. The patches of light which here and there diversify the general gloom can be no substitutes for the Gospel, but they may be witnesses for it. These symptoms of preparedness to receive the Gospel may strengthen our faith that the time will come when the whole world will be subject to its sway ; when all over the earth the anthem shall be raised, “ Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”



THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF THE EUCCHARISTIC RITE.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

—MATTHEW XXVI. 26-28.

I DO not know whether it is necessary to offer any explanation of the fact, that of the Gospel history, about one-third part is occupied with the account of the sayings and events of the last week of the Saviour's life on earth. To say nothing of the intrinsic importance of those deeds and words, we feel how natural it is that the thoughts of any, from whom has been taken one whom they loved and valued, should dwell on the memory of all that he said or did immediately before he was parted from them. Parting words live long in the memory; a dying charge has a peculiar sacredness. There were, then, no words of Christ which it was so impossible for any who heard them ever to forget, as those in which, when about to be separated from His disciples, He appealed to their love, and taught them how it was His wish that they should keep Him in memory after He was gone. And for all who love Him no words, it might be supposed, are more suggestive of

matter of solemn and peaceful meditation. Yet it has come to pass now that with us these words are suggestive of strife. The subject is certainly one on which it has now become impossible to escape controversy; but at present I intend to speak only of those things, the truths of which we all agree in admitting; and though my treatment of the text will be controversial, the controversy will be directed against those who are without. I wish, in short, to dwell on the bearings on Christian evidences of the history recorded in the text.

On the revival of learning and the birth of modern critical science, it was discovered that many documents, handed down from previous generations, and which had met from them with unenquiring acceptance, were unworthy of the reverence which they had received. At first this process of rejection went on but slowly. It seemed presumptuous to question what men in former days, entitled to honour for their learning, had with one consent admitted. Assaults were only made on those works which were least strongly guarded by prescriptive reverence; and even with respect to these the battle was, for a considerable time, stoutly contested. But one victory after another emboldened the assailants. At length nothing was too sacred for attack; the records of our faith have been subjected to the severest scrutiny, and often on grounds which scarcely warranted a suspicion, sentence of absolute condemnation has been pronounced. There

are symptoms now that the era of merely destructive criticism is passing away. The adversaries of Christianity do not content themselves now with scoffs and objections against the faith which we profess; they acknowledge the necessity of substituting something of their own; they own themselves bound to answer the question, what they think of Christ? what facts must they admit as certainly proved concerning that real human life on earth, which undoubtedly has had such abiding influence on the history of our whole race? For writing the history of this life we have scarcely any materials, but those Gospel narratives which some of the historians, to whom I refer, treat with such scant respect; and it is, therefore, well that we should fully use the few opportunities we have of testing the truth of these narratives by independent evidence. One of these opportunities is afforded in that history which I have taken for my present subject—that of the Institution of the Christian Sacred Feast—a history which could be established by satisfactory proof, even if none of the four Gospels had reached us. As far as we can trace back the history of our religion, this solemn feast was an essential part of Christian worship. In early times, indeed, there was some reserve as to stating publicly in the presence of the heathen what the Church believed as to the food which they there received. “That which the faithful know,” was the common phrase when speaking in the presence of

the uninitiated. Yet the veil thus used was so transparent, and those who employ it at one moment, lay it aside so carelessly at another, that there reserve appears to be rather that of reverence than of mystery. Certainly Christians of the very earliest times made no affectation of concealment. In the second century Justin Martyr, in his *Apology* addressed to heathen, gives a full description of the mode in which the rite was then administered; and goes on to declare that Christians had been taught that the food over which thanksgiving has been made is the Flesh and Blood of the Incarnate Jesus. "For the Apostles in their memoirs, which are called Gospels, have delivered that Jesus so commanded them, that He having taken bread and given thanks, said, 'Do this in remembrance of Me. This is my body'; and likewise, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, 'This is My Blood.'"

The account thus cited is professedly founded on the Gospel History. But we can go back a century earlier for decisive testimony as to the belief of the first generation of Christians—namely, to the account given by St. Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians—an epistle, the genuineness of which is not contested by the most sceptical of critics. St. Paul says, "I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it and

said, 'Take, eat; this is My Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me.' '' After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, 'This cup is the New Testament in My Blood; this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me.' This account is in verbal agreement with that given by St. Luke in his Gospel; but there is no reason to think that the one was copied from the other. On comparing the history of the appearances of our Lord after His resurrection, given in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, with that given in the Gospel, we have every reason for believing in the independence of the two accounts. In particular, if St. Luke, when writing the Gospel, had before him the Epistle to the Corinthians, it seems unlikely that he would not have told us something more about the appearance to St. James, or about that to the five hundred brethren at once. It is the more remarkable, then, that St. Luke's account of the institution of the Eucharist should be in close verbal agreement with that of St. Paul, though not so with those of SS. Matthew and Mark. Yet the matter receives a very simple explanation, if we only suppose a liturgical usage to be apostolic which we can otherwise trace back very close to apostolic times—namely, that of reciting the history of our Lord's institution of the rite at the time of consecration.

For if this were so, St. Luke, who must have

been so often present when St. Paul celebrated this memorial of his Lord, must have repeatedly heard these words recited by St. Paul, and therefore might be expected to record them in his Gospel in the form in which St. Paul had delivered them unto him. On the whole, then, there is absolute historical proof that at the time when the majority were alive of those who professed to have seen Jesus of Nazareth after He rose from the dead, it was the universal belief among Christians that their Master, on the night He was betrayed, had given to His disciples bread and wine, had assured them that in partaking of that food they should eat His Body and drink His Blood, and had commanded them to continue that celebration in remembrance of Him; and it is certain that they did so continue it in obedience to that alleged command.

The next question is—Is it possible that this belief and this practice could have arisen, if the account which Christians themselves gave of its origin were not the true one? Reverence forbids me to describe this Christian institution in the language we should employ if we had never heard of it before, and if we came to know it now for the first time as a religious rite practised by some newly-discovered tribe. But the more there is shocking and seemingly absurd in the language used concerning this institution, the less likely is it that Christians would have spontaneously imagined this mode of doing honour to their Master, and showing their love and gratitude

towards Him. We could quite understand the Christian society maintaining and ratifying their relations of mutual friendship by the institution of a common meal. The doctrine of the common brotherhood of all, and the duty of mutual love, would be aptly symbolized by all joining on equal terms to partake of a common meal, consisting of bread and wine, the simplest, and in those countries the most universal articles of food; and while thus owning their mutual fellowship, acknowledging also their dependence on God, whose gifts they owned these blessings to be, to whom they returned thanks for them, and to whom they dedicated not only their offerings, but themselves. If the Eucharistic Feast were nothing more than a simple repast, forcibly expressing the common human wants of all, and their common dependence on the bounty of the same Father, it would commend itself to any one as a reasonable and wise institution, and we should have no difficulty in understanding how good men might have imagined it. But it is mysterious that the disciples should use concerning their rite language which would imply that theirs was a banquet on human flesh and blood—not ordinary human flesh but the Body of Him Whom, when alive, they had most loved, and whom they now worshipped as God. It was no uncommon charge brought of old against different secret societies or bands of dark conspirators, that in order that the members might testify their readiness to sacrifice every prejudice and disre-

gard every law, human or divine, which might interfere with the fulfilment of their duty to the society, they were compelled, on their initiation, to taste of human blood. Such charges were, no doubt, in many cases, as mere calumnies as the accusation of Thyestean banquets commonly brought by heathens against the Christian community. In all the cases the charges come to us on the testimony of enemies; but there is no instance of a society really innocent of such practices choosing to use language that implied it was guilty of them. Least of all should we expect to hear such language from the lips of Jews. Not merely was food at which all men revolt abhorrent to them, but it was the peculiar boast of a pious Jew that nothing common or unclean had ever polluted his mouth. To eat swine's flesh was, in their eyes, as heinous as an offence against the moral law; to taste the blood of any animal was as much forbidden as to drink human blood; the very touch of a dead body was pollution. Now, we know for how long a period the obligation of the Mosaic law was insisted on; how many thousands of Judaizing Christians there were who wished to include this law as an essential part of the Christian system, and that it was at least a century after the Apostles' times before these Judaizers were completely separated from the Christian Church. But we can trace the Eucharistic rite as existing from the earliest times, and as common to all parties in these disputes, however strong their attachment to

Mosaic ordinances. Again, if the rite were first heard of in a later generation among men to whom Christ was but a mere name, we might explain the language used as some mystical Eastern mode of expressing their desire to enter into most intimate union with Him whom they venerated as their Founder. But St. Paul's testimony makes it certain that Christians spoke of eating our Lord's Flesh and drinking His Blood, to whom Jesus was not a mere abstract name for typical perfect humanity; but at a time when the majority were still living of those who professed that they had seen Him after He had risen from the dead; while those were still alive who had known and loved Him as a human friend; who had thought no balms or spices too costly to do honour to His mortal remains, and to whom the thought of violating their sanctity would be as revolting as a similar thought in the case of one of our own dead friends would be to any of ourselves. Thus it appears that the origin of the Christian Eucharistic Feast is absolutely inexplicable, if we reject the simple account of it given by the sacred writers—that the disciples used no language concerning it except what their Master Himself had taught them to use.

I dare say I shall seem to many of you to have strangely spent time in painfully elaborating a proof that we may accept as literally true what it never occurred to you to doubt—that our Lord on the night He was betrayed took

bread and brake it, and gave it to His disciples with the words, "Take, eat, this My Body; do this in remembrance of Me." I have done so because of the important consequences which I regard as following when this fact is proved; as to our Lord's Divine foreknowledge, His intention to found a Church, and the relation which He declared that He Himself personally bore to the spiritual life of all men—a doctrine involving pretensions extravagant on the part of any merely human teacher, but strange, indeed, when coming from the mouth of One who is supposed at the time to have given up all hope of a successful issue to His enterprise, and to be looking forward to the prospect of an approaching shameful death. On account of the importance of these consequences I have desired, before attempting to draw them, to show that our belief in the fact on which they are based does not depend on our belief concerning the inspiration of the Gospels, nor even on our belief concerning their antiquity and integrity. Just as we could prove by plain historical evidence, if the Gospels had never come down to us, that the original preachers of Christianity hazarded their lives in attestation of the assertion that their Master rose from the dead, so we can prove independently of the Gospels, that it was their belief that He instituted the rite of which I speak to-day, and I have given reasons for holding that the very existence of such a belief among the first generation of Christians is a sufficient proof of its truth.

The importance which I attach to the proof of this fact is justified by the reluctance to admit it exhibited by sceptical writers, who are clear-sighted enough to perceive that the fact, if admitted, would compel them to reconstruct all their theories concerning the life and character of Jesus. In Renan's *Life of Jesus*, for example, the institution of the Lord's Supper finds no place. His excuse is, that this event is not recorded by St. John, whom Renan, differing herein from the majority of writers of his school, accepts as giving the most trustworthy account of the closing scenes of his Master's life. He assumes, without a shadow of proof, that the breaking of bread was a mysterious rite of unknown signification habitually practised by our Lord; and his theory is, that afterwards, when the disciples came to look on our Lord's death as a sacrifice superseding the offerings of the Old Law, then the tendency of legends to gather round the story of the last hours of the life of Jesus referred the breaking of bread to the Last Supper, and made the wine then poured out to symbolize the blood shed for the salvation of the world. But it is needless to say how completely this theory leaves unsolved the problem of the origin of the Christian Eucharistic rite. That the Christians early looked on their Master's death as a sacrifice we readily admit; but there is an immense gulf between such a belief and the doctrine that Christians were bound in some manner to eat of His Body and Blood. If we

could suppose John's Gospel intended for a complete account of all that Jesus said and did, his omission to explain a thing so much requiring explanation would be a sufficient reason for rejecting his authority; and the story, as given by the other Evangelists, would be plainly in preference entitled to credit. But there are numberless proofs on which I have not now time to dwell, that St. John wrote his Gospel for men to whom the main facts of the Gospel history were already known; indeed, there is every reason to believe, for men who had the other Gospels in their hands;* and that, as a general rule, this Evangelist studiously avoids repeating what he might assume was already known to his readers: so that his silence concerning any part of the history cannot be regarded as testimony against it. And certainly his silence concerning the institution of the Eucharist cannot be regarded as testimony against it, for, strangely enough, one of the arguments used by other sceptical critics against the genuineness of this Gospel is the coincidence of the language of the discourse in the sixth chapter with language used in the second century when Eucharistic doctrine was highly developed.

Strauss, unlike Renan, prefers the Synoptic Gospels to the fourth, and therefore he cannot lay stress on the silence of John with respect to a fact attested by the other three. He hesitates,

*In another volume in the first Paper, "The Irony of St. John."

then, and seems unable to make up his mind how much to admit. He believes that our Lord, on this last evening, was depressed in spirits, understanding His real position, unrelentingly pursued by the fanaticism of desperate enemies, and feebly supported by followers incapable of understanding Him. He thinks it possible, then, that when Jesus, as master of the household, broke the bread and poured out the wine for distribution among His disciples, the thought may have involuntarily presented itself to Him that even so would His Body soon be broken—so would His Blood soon be poured forth; and that He may have expressed some such gloomy foreboding to His disciples. Nay, Strauss will admit it to be possible that, looking on His death as a sacrifice, He may have regarded His Blood as the consecration of a new covenant between God and mankind; and in order to give a living centre to the community which He desired to found, might have commanded the perpetual repetition of this distribution of bread and wine. All this he says is possible, but whether it really took place is another question. If Jesus had expressed any anticipation of the approaching violent death, and if the Church had adopted the custom of distributing bread and wine in memory of His death, no doubt the institution of such a custom would be ascribed to Christ whether He were really the author of it or not; and if the Church had come to look on that bread and wine as the Body and Blood of

Christ, and the Blood as the Blood of a new covenant, no doubt, again, the story would soon obtain belief that Christ had Himself used language to justify such a belief. But who can grant the assumption which this "if" requires? How was it possible that the Church should come to give bread and wine the names of Christ's Body and Blood, if He Himself had not authorised their doing so?

Let us see, then, what follows from the reluctant admission of our adversaries. On the last night of His life, Jesus, though not possessing, as we believe, Divine foreknowledge of the future, had at least human knowledge that the toils of His enemies were closing round Him. He saw that death could no longer be escaped, and that the career which He had planned had ended in failure. Yet even then He calmly looks forward to the formation of a new society, which shall own Him as its Founder. He foresees that that flock of timorous followers whose dispersion on the next day He ventures to predict will recover the shock of their disappointment, and unite again. And as for this shameful death, the thoughts of which oppress Him, instead of anticipating that His followers will put it from their thoughts, and blush to remember their credulity, when they accepted as their Saviour one unable to save Himself, He commands His disciples to keep that death in perpetual memory. Notwithstanding the apparent failure of His course, He conceives

Himself to be an unique person in the world's history, and in Strauss' words He regards His death as the seal of a new covenant between God and mankind. What other man has ever dared to set such a value on his own life? If such a belief were not true, it would surely be the very frenzy of insanity. More than this—He makes it an ordinance of perpetual obligation to His followers that they shall seek the most intimate union with His Body and Blood, and holds out to them this closeness of perpetual union with Himself as the source of all spiritual life. One of the principal grounds on which some have urged us to reject St. John's Gospel is the lofty language which in that Gospel our Lord uses concerning His own person and claims; pressing these claims, it is said, in an exaggerated way, inconsistent with the meekness and humility which characterise His discourses recorded in the other Gospels. But in this narrative recorded by the Synoptic Evangelists, and not by St. John, we find Him making higher pretensions than on any other occasion, and making these claims under the very shadow of the Cross. It was no afterthought of His disciples to smooth away the offence of the Cross by ascribing to His death some mysterious efficacy; He Himself had taught them to look on His Blood as shed for them and for many for the remission of sins. He intimates that the event then taking place was comparable with the first setting apart of the Jewish nation to be

God's peculiar people; and as Moses had then sprinkled the people with blood, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant which God hath made with you, so now He calls His own the Blood of the new covenant. This legislation for a future Church was made at a moment when His most attached disciples could not be trusted to remain with Him for an hour, and when He had Himself predicted their desertion and denial. Our adversaries make no difficulty about admitting that our Lord predicted His death; for this, they think, did not exceed the powers of human forecast, so plain were the symptoms of the storm gathering round Him. But no ordinary human foresight could then discern that the infant Church would survive the shock of its Master's death, and instead of being ashamed of the Cross would glory in it, and look upon His death as the source of all life. Thus, then, we have not only in the Last Supper a spectacle of faith, calm and unshaken in circumstances the most desperate, but we have a prophecy of success improbable in the highest degree, and yet which received the most complete fulfilment.

We all believe that that prophecy was no random guess; that faith, no blind enthusiasm; we know that Jesus was all He claimed to be; that His death was the great sin-offering to restore the broken communion between God and man; union with Him the condition of our spiritual life. And we cannot doubt that it was

no empty words which He spoke when instituting that sacred rite. If His words have been perverted so as to give rise to error and superstition, there is the more reason for thinking that He who foreknew these consequences, and yet did not refrain from speaking, wished to make known truths more powerful for good than any of their perversions are for harm. We may believe that He then revealed the covenanted means which will enable those who use it in faith, spiritually to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, and to receive therein a pledge of all those blessings which His sacrificed Body can yield. Not alone in this rite is He present to those who in faith seek for Him. Where two or three are gathered together in His name He is in the midst of them. Even the private lifting up to Him of a single heart is not unmarked by Him. But we may well believe that an especial blessing attends those who in faith obey His commands, and seek Him in the ordinance He has appointed; not bewildering themselves in vain speculations how this Man shall give us His flesh to eat; not, on the one hand, denying all supernatural grace, and reducing all beneficial effect to the results of the natural operation of laws of our own minds; nor, on the other hand, insisting that men shall believe in the reality of miracles, of which there is no evidence, save that it seems to us that, in order to make our explanation of His words true, it is necessary that God should work them.

Such philosophizing shows want of faith in Christ's true presence, as much as the direct denial of it. Just as God's presence in this world was implicitly denied, not only by those who refused to lift their thoughts above His material works, but by those who strove to localize His presence, and could not recognise Him except where there was some figure to represent Him made by hands of men. But, as I have said, my purpose to-day is not to discuss any of those points on which Christians disagree, but to show the place among the evidences of our religion occupied by the fact, that Christians have from the first observed this institution; a fact of which no other explanation can be given but that contained in the Gospel account of the origin of the rite; and a fact which proves that our Lord in the immediate prospect of approaching death looked on that death not as the end of His religion, but the beginning of it; a sacrifice for the sins of the world, the source of all good to mankind. He who spoke of Himself thus was confessedly a wise man, a meek and humble man. Could He have been only man?

SPIRITUAL STATE.

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”—HEBREWS VI. 1-6.

THE verses I have read are commonly reckoned among the difficulties of Scripture; the difficulty, however, being, not that it seems hard to find the doctrine, which, taken singly, the text appears to teach, but that it seems hard to accept that doctrine, and to reconcile it with the rest of Scripture. There are so many passages of the Bible which speak of God's willingness to forgive sin, and of His readiness to welcome back the returning prodigal, that we are startled when we meet with a verse which seems to declare that there are some against whom the door of mercy is closed; some in whose case repentance and forgiveness is impossible. Again, there are passages which speak of the well-grounded confidence which a Christian may entertain, that he who has begun a good work in him will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; and hence many have found it difficult to understand how apostacy and final

falling away could have been possible in the case of persons whose spiritual condition could be described in the language of the 4th and 5th verses, where we read of them as having been once enlightened, as having tasted of the heavenly gift, having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, having tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and yet, as falling away beyond recovery. In early times the difficulty of these verses was felt ; and some have supposed that the teaching of this part of the Epistle was the cause that its apostolic authority was for a considerable time not acknowledged in the Western Church.

It would be gross exaggeration wholly to account in this way for the doubts of which I speak, and which certainly arose from dissatisfaction rather with the external evidence than accessible for the authorship of the Epistle, than with its doctrinal teaching. And yet we cannot help thinking that fears as to the injurious tendency of this part of the Epistle may have prolonged the period of hesitation as to its authority, and made Christians less willing to accept the external evidence offered to them. For it is certain that the doubts lasted longest in the place where the controversy on which these verses bear, raged most warmly.

In our day the questions raised by the verses I have read, may be said in comparison to belong to the department of theoretic and speculative theology ; but in early times they involved some

important practical points, on which it was necessary that the rulers of the Church should come to an immediate decision. It may appear strange to us, that a religion of such pure morality as ours should ever have seemed to any immoral in its tendency; and yet it is certain that many, of decorous and virtuous lives, were shocked at the freedom of the Gospel promises of pardon of sins, and at the welcome it gave even to notorious sinners on their profession of repentance. You remember how, in Our Lord's life-time, the Pharisees, those careful and precise observers of the law, were scandalized at seeing Jesus surrounded by publicans and sinners. Gentile unbelievers learned to bring the same accusation against the Church which He founded, and charged her with encouraging men guilty of the grossest crimes, to think they had nothing to do but to come to her to be forgiven. Thus, for example, it was whispered that the attraction which Christianity presented to the first Christian emperor was, that it promised him absolution for crimes which pagan morality was too stern to pardon. And it was true that to souls weighed down by the consciousness of guilt, the preachers of the Gospel did offer release from the pressure of unforgiven sin. Though your sins be as scarlet, they proclaimed, they shall be white as snow. They permitted their converts to cast oblivion on that part of their life which had gone by before they had passed through the waters of baptism. In times past they might have been

fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners ; but now they had been washed, had been sanctified, had been justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. But no immoral consequences resulted from the blotting out of those dark memories of the past. On the contrary, an obstacle was removed which had kept the soul from approaching to God ; the sense of His full and free forgiveness, obtained by the precious blood of His Son, filled the heart with love and gratitude to Him. And nothing can secure, not merely purity of outward conduct, but purity of heart, so well as that love of God, founded on a sense of His unmerited mercy, which brings the soul to feel pleasure in habitual thought of the presence of Him who is of infinite purity.

But the problem, how to deal with sinners who professed repentance, soon presented itself in a new form. The Reformation worked in the character of the Christian converts was not in every case permanent. Some, who had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, were again entangled therein and overcome. Some, with more or less excuse from terror of persecution, denied the faith, and blasphemed the worthy name by which they had been called. What was to be done with those who had been tried and had been found wanting, when they came soliciting a second trial ? The vices of

their heathen life had been forgiven ; they had been trusted, and welcomed as born anew in Christ ; and if, after this, those professed servants of Christ broke out again into their heathen vices, was there any ground to hope that a new forgiveness would not be followed by a new relapse ? We may bring the matter home to ourselves by an illustration drawn from our own times. It is not uncommon now to hear of public advocates of temperance freely owning that in early life they had themselves been under the dominion of the vice which they exhort others to forsake ; or to hear of men engaged in publicly exhorting others to conversion who do not scruple to acknowledge that, previous to their own conversion, they had been sunk in ungodliness and utter profligacy. And these confessions are not found to impair the effectiveness of their preaching. But suppose, after a time, the preacher to relapse into the vices from which he boasts that he had escaped, what a scandal such a fall would be, and how could he expect that any subsequent repentance would enable him to be tried and trusted again. Now, when the Gospel was first published, every Christian was a preacher of righteousness, and the apostacy or relapse into profligacy of a private Christian was a scandal to the whole community, such as would be caused among ourselves by the gross sin of a clergyman, or of someone else who is counted to have publicly pledged himself to more than ordinary holiness.

There is no difficulty, then, in understanding the strong feeling entertained by many Christians against the re-admission of the lapsed, at least, not until after long probation, and on such terms that their sin should be always held in remembrance, and never seem to have obtained complete forgiveness. And yet eventually a more merciful view prevailed in the Church. It may have chanced that some who had been stern to their fallen brethren, by their own subsequent fall taught others the full meaning of the Apostle's admonition: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." And it was found that not only in the case of sins committed in the period of heathen darkness, but also in the case of sins far less excusable, because committed against clearer light and knowledge (deadly sins wilfully committed after baptism), it would be wrong to deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent. Nay, as in the parable of the two debtors, the recollection how much had been forgiven was a force constantly urging the pardoned sinner to love his merciful Saviour more. Those, then, who had learned by experience the mischievous effects of such excessive rigour as might drive the sinner to despair, were naturally cautious in admitting the apostolic authority of a writing apparently favourable to the more rigorous view. And when the autho-

city of this Epistle came to be generally owned, an interpretation of the text found favour which seemed to lead to no dangerous consequences. The Apostle, it was said, did not mean to deny to the fallen the possibility of repentance ; what he meant to declare was that there was no possibility of a second baptism. It was not possible to renew them, or to make them new, by crucifying for them the Son of God afresh ; words, it was urged, which pointed to baptism, wherein the disciple became a new creature, and wherein, as we learn also from other parts of Scripture, the death and burial and resurrection of Our Lord are represented, the convert dying unto sin, crucifying the lusts of his earthly members, buried with his Lord in baptism, and rising again to walk in newness of life.

If this interpretation appear strained to you, we may ask ourselves whether we ourselves always resist the temptation of allowing our interpretations of Scripture to be warped by the exigencies of the controversies of our own days ; whether we do not at times turn aside from the obvious meaning of a passage of Scripture, lest it should extort from us a concession of which opponents of ours may make a dangerous use. The remembrance how completely our text has outlived one at least of the controversies on which it seems most directly to bear may remind us that the Bible is a book for all time, whose meaning must not be narrowed down to what we may fancy the requirements of our own day. In

striving, then, to draw for our own instruction some of the lessons contained in the verses I have read, I think it safest avoiding all controversial minuteness, to try to fix your minds on some of the great truths which seem clearly taught in the text. And in the first place, if we are to interpret the writer's words according to their natural meaning, he seems plainly to declare that there are some in this world whose spiritual condition may be pronounced hopeless. We are accustomed to think of this life as a scene of constant change—change often modifying the judgments we have formed of the characters of other men, who in some cases disappoint the hopes we have entertained of them ; in others, unexpectedly return to the right way after we had feared that they had wandered from it beyond recovery. But we think of death as fixing a man's condition ; after that there can be no repentance ; where the tree has fallen there it must be. But we are here taught that it is not in what we call death that this fixity of condition always first takes place. A soul may appear to men to live, and yet in God's sight have assumed the stiffness and rigidity of a corpse, its capabilities of spiritual life lost irrecoverably, save by miracle. This conclusion does not rest on the text merely ; there is another well-known passage in the tenth chapter of this same Epistle : " If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." And these verses, which speak of the impossibility of repentance under certain circumstances, connect themselves naturally in our minds with Our Lord's awful warning against that sin against the Holy Ghost, which hath never forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. The very unlikeness of these warnings to the general tenor of the New Testament is a reason, not for rejecting or turning away our thoughts from them, but for giving them more earnest attention. The whole Gospel is a message of forgiveness, free and unmerited. Its invitations are without restriction or limitation. The blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are told, cleanseth from all sin. The voice of threatening, then, from its very rarity, strikes on our ears with awful significance. Our attention is arrested when we hear the All-merciful declare that there are bounds to His mercy, when He who is all-powerful to redeem tells us of a depth of sin from which there is no return. We should find it hard to believe this, if told us on less weighty authority. Yet now that it has been revealed to us as true, we find on reflection other truths with which it harmonizes.

We are familiar with the operation of the laws of habit. We know how virtuous exertions once only made at the cost of much self-denial, when daily repeated, require less and less effort, and at last become so natural that it would be a pain to

abandon them. We know how temptations once deemed formidable, if manfully resisted, lose their power to entice ; and how thus the ways of holiness become more easy and more pleasant the longer they are walked in. And, on the other hand, we know how progress in the downward path of sin becomes with each step accelerated ; how habit winds closer and tighter the chains of sin round its votaries ; how he who had but intended lightly to taste of sinful pleasures, intoxicated by the draught, loses power to put away the cup from his lips. We may daily see the process of fixing men's spiritual state going on before our eyes. We may see the lines of their characters deepening and hardening ; carelessness as to the things of God settling into fixed indifference, and proceeding to contempt and rooted aversion. Now, reason and Scripture lead us to think that death makes no abrupt change in man's state. Rather are our future lives only the development of the fruits of the character formed during our probation time on earth.

The life or death of the soul, which is to last for ever, begins in this world. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; he that believeth not is condemned already." It is quite credible, then, that the process of which I speak may go on so far that the lines of men's characters may have been deepened and hardened so as to become, humanly speaking, unalterable. On the one hand, we may believe that saints

may so grow in grace as to enjoy on earth the safety of heaven. They may not dare to count themselves to have already attained the mark they aim at, or to be already perfect ; yet in God's sight they may stand firm, beyond all danger of fall or slip. And on the other hand, men's hearts may have been so hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that recovery shall have become impossible for them. Observe the nature of the impossibility of which I speak. The text does not declare that certain sinners, though truly penitent, and mourning their offences, shall be unable to find pardon or atonement for them ; the impossibility of which it speaks is an impossibility of renewing them to repentance. If they remain condemned, it is because they do not repent ; and, as I was saying, there is nothing which need seem to us incredible in the statement that sinners may be so hardened in their sin that their repentance shall have become, humanly speaking, impossible.

We should grievously err if we ventured to pronounce of any sinner that he is beyond the grace of God. He himself would grievously err if he were to despair. Nay, however grievously sunk in sin, as long as he can mourn his fall, and hate himself for his departure from God, and sigh after restoration, we have evidence that the seeds of repentance are not yet extinct in his soul. But yet it may be that a man of whom God's ministers dare not despair, to whom they

are bound to address their word of exhortation, whether he will hear, or whether he will forbear, may, in truth, have so stopped his ears as to be inaccessible to their warnings ; and the stroke of death may not make him, but find him, insensible to the things of God.

Thus, I think, we have seen that the doctrine contained in the solemn warning of the text harmonizes with what we may infer elsewhere from Scripture. And if we now examine a little more closely into the text, and inquire in what circumstances arises the danger of falling into the hopeless condition it describes, the answer also seems plain, that it tells us that the condition of any is more desperate in proportion to the greatness of the privileges he has abused, and to the riches of the mercy he has trodden under foot. Here, too, we are in sight of the general law of God's dealings, that the privileges involve responsibility ; that from him to whom much is given much will be required. Far more hopeless is the condition of the baptized Christian who despises the invitation of the Gospel, than that of the heathen who has never heard the name of Christ. The sufferer under some painful disease may cherish hope that when his case has been laid before a skilful physician, a remedy will be found which will restore him to health ; but when all the most skilful physicians have tried their remedies on him in vain, then, indeed, his state may be pronounced desperate. And so there is hope of the

idolaters of some distant isle, that when at length the Gospel sound shall have reached them, they will cast their idols to the moles and to the bats. But if you, who have heard times without number the things of the infinite love of God through Christ, hear the wondrous tale unmoved ; the preacher has no message to bring you but that which has been delivered to you already. "For those who despise that sacrifice, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." The spotless Lamb of God has been offered once for all ; no new victim can be slain for those who reject Him, nor can He be crucified again for those who disdain the offering He has already made.

But if the condition of the impenitent baptized Christian is worse than that of the heathen, there is a further gradation. The condition of the careless sinner who has scarcely ever attended to the Gospel message, and in whose ears the preacher's warnings have sounded but as empty words which convey no meaning, is less hopeless than that of him who has heard, and heard with pleasure, whose emotions have been stirred up, and have subsided again without ever fastening on the active principles of his nature and setting them in motion. It may happen, and often does happen, to the one, that he one day suddenly catches the meaning of words which had often sounded in his ears without exciting any ideas ; that the message often heard but never understood before strikes him

with all the force of novelty, awakening new emotions, and touching on new springs of action. But in the case of one who has not only heard all that the Gospel announces, but listened to it, allowed his imagination to dwell on it, and his sensibilities to be excited by it, and yet whose emotions have died away without ever becoming practical principles of action, it is harder far to expect a new awakening of heart. His capabilities of religious emotion have been exhausted ; the truths that once had power to stir the liveliest feelings move him but languidly now ; and what fruit can we expect in future from appeals and arguments long familiar and long ineffectual ?

The connection of the 5th and 6th verses with the beginning of the chapter, may give us a practical lesson as to one of the causes why what seems a promising beginning of the spiritual life is sometimes cut short without leading to any permanent result. To a hasty reader it might seem, when the Apostle declares again his intention of not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment, as if he were speaking slightly of the most fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. But the writer's object in speaking of these fundamental doctrines, plainly is to urge the danger of laying a good foundation and building nothing on it. And a mistake of an analogous kind seems to me to be committed by

those who fix their thoughts too exclusively on the first step in the spiritual life—who care to ask themselves no other question than, Have I been converted?—Have I been born again?—and who, if they can answer “Yes,” think the Christian minister has no message to them, but are willing to hear him exhort others to strive to gain the same privilege. The truth is, a foundation is important, because a building is to be reared upon it. We rejoice at a birth because it is the beginning of a life; and the birth of a Christian soul is the beginning of a life of daily growth under the influence of God’s Holy Spirit, till he attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. To remain in thought and wish always at the first point of the spiritual life is, in other words, to be without growth in grace; that is to say, to be without any true life at all. And the Apostle would warn us that if the spiritual life of a man be stationary, always remaining at the point where it commenced, the attainments he has made, instead of being a ground of confidence to him, should fill him with wholesome fear, lest if, in spite of all these, his soul be in an unprogressive dead condition, it should only be the more difficult to renew it again to repentance.

I have spoken of what seem to be the most prominent truths taught in the text, but I have no wish to evade the question, Does the Apostle here speak of a fall from grace as possible?

And I do not know whether the controversies on this subject, as far at least as they can pro-

ceed within the limits of our Church's teaching, are not theoretical, and perhaps verbal rather than practical. It is agreed by all that we learn from this passage that there are workings of God's Spirit upon the hearts of men who are not finally saved. Thus Calvin, in his commentary on this passage, while maintaining that the elect are without danger of fatal loss, yet says that this hinders him not from owning that God sprinkles on the reprobate also some taste of His grace, irradiates their minds with some sparks of His light, affects them with some sense of His goodness, and in some way writes His Word in their souls. And he quotes the parable of the sower as proving that there may be in the reprobate some temporary faith and knowledge, which, however, fail because the roots are not so deep as they ought to be, or because the seed sown is choked by the thorns of worldly cares and pleasures.

So, again, the framers of the Lambeth Articles deliberately rejected the statement that grace fails not in those to whom it has been once given; and adopted the very different one, that it fails not in the elect; in other words, admitting, and intending to admit, that to those not elect there may have been given a certain grace which does not bring forth fruit to perfection. As long, therefore, as both parties hold to the doctrine of the 17th Article, that the decrees of God's election are secret to us, the question whether or not grace may fail in the elect, is less of a practical one than might have been supposed. A man may

hear the Word gladly, and do many things because of it, and give what seem to be evidences of the work of God's grace in his heart, yet we cannot predict with absolute certainty that he must abide to the end. Only if he fall away we conclude that he was not one of the elect. The result, then, if stated as a theoretical dogma, seems to be—a fall from a certain kind of grace is possible ; but it is impossible finally to fall away from that particular kind of grace from which final fall is impossible. And the result will prove which kind of grace any man has received.

Some will feel that the explanation I have given converts into a barren truism a doctrine which had been a source of precious comfort to their souls. A Christian conscious of much frailty, of frequent coldness of heart, of repeated wanderings from the Father's ways, and full, therefore, of distrust in himself, finds comfort in meditating on the unchanging love of God, which sought him while yet a stranger, inspired in him every good thought he can find in himself, and as it took its origin in no worthiness of his, so he believes it will not forsake him, notwithstanding his stumbles on the heavenly road, but will abide with him to the end. But they who feel thus have already some of the evidences of election of which the article speaks ; in the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to heavenly things. The doctrine of the indefectibility of grace may be a most mischievous

one, as held by one full of the spirit of slavish fear, dreading future punishment, and anxious for some infallible sign which will enable him to dismiss all apprehension of judgment to come. As the manna of old, when laid by for the morrow, bred worms and stank, so the promises which Christ has given for the daily sustenance of His people are abused, if it is attempted to support present life on the food of a former day. A man will trust to a delusion if, though not living the life with Christ now, he flatters himself that he must be safe, because he was sure he was Christ's formerly. But to a soul that loves God, and grieves that it loves Him so imperfectly, and dreading nothing so much as to lose His love, distrusts its own strength, and fears lest it may break away—to such a soul it can do nothing but good to remember that it is not in its own strength it stands ; the Eternal God is its refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. The doctrine that man's eternal state may be fixed on earth has not only its awful side, it has an aspect full of comfort. The character that is to abide in heaven may be fully formed in the discipline of earth, and the white robes of the redeemed worn by men clad in mortal bodies. And every proof of the triumph of God's grace in their souls gives them confidence to say, "Thou, O Lord, will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. Forsake not, then, the work of Thine Own hands."

I know not whether the precept, "Take no

thought for the morrow," has not a spiritual application. We know that in temporal matters our Lord did not mean to forbid forethought and use of means to provide for the future. But if any disquiet himself with the apprehension, I have food and raiment now, shall I always have them? our Lord would hush all such distracting anxiety with the thought, "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things before ye ask Him." And so I know not whether if any raise the question, I love God now, but shall I always love Him? the very starting of the question does not imply lack of faith. If you love God, can you not trust Him—trust not only for the present, but for the future? Believe assuredly that when you ask for grace to love Him better, and for strength to continue in His love, you ask only what it is His delight to grant. Such a petition He is more ready to grant than you to put forth.

As in temporal matters, so in spiritual, the knowledge of God's love is not intended to release us from the use of means or from the need of vigilance. In spiritual matters as in temporal, God would have us under a constant sense of our dependence on Him, and wishes us to put forth petitions for our daily food. But if ever you are a prey to self-torturing anxieties, rebuke them away with a thought that if you love God at all it is because He first loved you with an infinite love. In spiritual matters, even more than in temporal, He knoweth what you have

need of before you ask ; and if no earthly parent refuses to his child the bread which he asks, so He who loves your souls with a love beyond that of the most affectionate earthly father, will neither now nor at any future time deny His Holy Spirit to you that ask Him.



INFANT BAPTISM.

“And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”—Mark xvi. 15, 16.

It has often happened to mathematical students to feel temporary perplexity when called on to demonstrate some well-known elementary principle, just because, though they have had frequent occasion to employ it, and to assume its truth, it is long since they had occasion to examine its proof. And so in like manner, in general, men find it easier to support by argument those parts of their belief which they have been accustomed to hear assailed (even though complicated reasoning may be necessary for their defence) than to give good reasons why they hold principles which they do not expect to hear disputed, and for the defence of which they are consequently unprepared. For example, it has often happened that a man who might be described as a skilful theologian, as far as regards his power to maintain his doctrines by Scripture proofs, has been silenced on meeting for the first time one who denied the authority of the Bible. The arguments on which he had been accustomed to rely have suddenly become unavailing, while he has not been prepared at once to give reasons for his submission to an authority which he is surprised and shocked

to hear questioned. It is on this account that a clergyman's education must embrace the knowledge of some controversies now extinct, and of others with which it seems unlikely that he will ever be brought in contact. Else he is in danger on being taken unawares when he is called on to maintain principles which he had expected would have been conceded to him without controversy.

These introductory remarks are intended to suggest my apology if, in bringing before you to-day the subject of Infant Baptism, I should seem to have undertaken to defend a position not seriously in danger. I am about to try to show to you that the whole Christian world has not been in error—in error, without an exception, for 1,500 years, and, with insignificant exceptions, for the remaining three or four centuries of the Church's existence—in supposing that it was permitted them to bring their children to the Saviour, and from their earliest years to dedicate them to His service. I am about to try to show that our fathers, who have fallen asleep in Christ, lacked nothing essential to their salvation, that they did not live and die in disregard of their Master's parting commands. I am about to try to show that the baptism which alone we and they received, conferred on us when we were helpless infants, was true baptism, and needs not to be repeated.

Let it be understood that unless our error is

alleged to be deeply grave and important, there is no room for controversy. It will not be disputed that the ceremonies of the Church may be altered from time to time, as national customs change, so as better to supply the wants of each changing age. In matters of ritual and Church ordinance there is no absolute right or wrong unless we are tied up by an express command from God Himself. Even with regard to the Sacraments, the obligation of which does depend on Christ's express command, there is no doubt that the mere details of the form of administration have changed from time to time, and may be changed. When anyone, therefore, says that the whole Christian world has been wrong with respect to the sacrament of baptism, we ask in what respect do you assert that they have been wrong?—wrong with respect to some non-essential detail, or with respect to something affecting the very essence of the rite? Now, with respect to any non-essential detail, the whole Christian world cannot be wrong; for there is no absolute right or wrong in the matter, and the manner in which the Christian Church has consented to use the rite must be the right one. But if you say that the error reaches to the very essence of the sacrament (and this is what is asserted, for baptism conferred in infancy is treated as null, and those who have only received such baptism are baptized anew), if, then, this be so, it follows that for hundreds and hundreds of years there was

scarcely a single baptized Christian in the world; that at this moment their number can be counted only by hundreds; that whole generations of Christians eager (superstitiously eager, if you will) to fulfil their Master's commands to baptize all nations, yet misconceived the meaning of so plain a precept, and, consequently, wholly failed to obey it. I must, therefore, try to show that when Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism He did not conceal from His followers anything essential to the due performance of the rite. I must show that if He had intended to place any restrictions as to the manner in which the rite was to be performed, or as to the persons to whom it was to be administered, He did not so wholly omit to warn His people of those restrictions that the knowledge of them perished out of the world, and was not revived until in quite recent times. The question, when stated, seems so to contain its own answer that I thought it necessary to begin by showing the importance of occasionally going over the proof of truths, which seem almost self-evident. In the present instance certainly the fact that there are multitudes who traditionally accept Infant Baptism without ever having reflected what can be said for or against it, is that which alone has given any chance of success to the assaults which at the present time have been made on the principles of our Church.*

*At the time this sermon was preached, some exertions had been used to circulate in this country a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text, assailing the practice of Infant Baptism.

These assaults on the lawfulness of Infant Baptism are usually disguised under the form of an attack on the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. In this form they seem to have the best chance of meeting with a favourable reception from many, who, imagining the assault to be directed only against extreme views held by a section of our Church, overlook that the attack is really made on principles held by all in common. In what I have now to say, I think it important not to be led away from the real points at issue, into discussions only introduced in the hope of causing division in our own ranks. In any case, a question about facts ought to take precedence of a question about words. If any one asserts that it is unmeaning superstition to baptize an infant, who they imagine is incapable of deriving any spiritual benefit from such a rite, there is a real intelligible difference between his doctrine and that of the Church of England. On the other hand, if two persons are completely agreed as to the nature of the benefits conferred by baptism, and only differ as to whether the word regeneration is fitly used to describe these benefits, then the controversy is only verbal. There is no point in theology in which it is more necessary to distinguish verbal controversies from real than the subject now before us. For it may be laid down as a rule that when two persons differ widely as to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, they will invariably be found to use the word regeneration in two different senses. No doubt the importance of the right use

of the words must by no means be underrated; but still our wisest order of proceeding is first, if possible, to ascertain what the facts are, and then we shall be most likely to agree as to the words by which these facts can be most fitly described. I come, then, to the consideration of the text, which I have selected because it has been supposed, I know not why, to be antagonistic to the teaching of our Church. The text consists of two parts—a promise and a threat. And it is plain at first sight that two conditions are necessary to bring any one under the class to which the promise is addressed. He must believe and he must be baptized. The text, therefore, seems to be rightly used, when employed to confute any who mutilate our Saviour's message, and leave out either of the two conditions which He has named. On the one hand, if, having read this text, I were to teach you that baptism without faith could save you, I should be in glaring opposition to my text. On the other hand, if having read the text, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved," I were to proceed and say, "Nay, he that believeth is saved," and none has a right to be baptised until he is saved," it would only require a moment's reflection to enable you to see that the preacher was saying one thing and the text another.

The more fully convinced we are that our salvation is a free gift bestowed on us for the merits of our Saviour, and without any works or deserving of our own, the more willing shall we be humbly to come to Him and hear at His own lips the terms on which He bestows it. We shall then

feel that it does not become us to form our theories first as to the conditions which He ought to impose, and to judge of His statements by our theories, instead of simply hearing His word and obeying it. Thus we should come to the investigation of the text in a wrong spirit, if we were to begin by laying it down that baptism could form no part of His requirements, because it seemed to us out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach, that He should make our salvation in any degree dependent on a mere ceremony. This was precisely the spirit in which Naaman came to the prophet Elisha. He began by forming his theory, how it would be in character that the prophet should proceed, and he rejected his command to wash in Jordan, because he could not see how his cleansing should depend on such a ceremony. It is in a very different spirit we ought to come to our Lord; we should come in a spirit of teachable humility, in a spirit of faith and obedience, prepared, if He declare anything, to believe it; if He command anything, to do it.

It being plain, then, from the text, that two things are necessary to bring us under the class to which our Lord's promise is addressed, that we should believe, and that we should be baptized, the next question is when and in what order should these two things be done. It seems to me that there is but one answer—if we really love our Lord and are anxious to do His will, 'Each of those two things at the very first opportunity in our power.' We should believe as soon as we are capable of believing; we should be baptized as soon

as we are capable of being baptized. Suppose that anyone whom you ardently loved, and whom you were eager to please, asked you to do two things for his sake, and prescribed nothing as to the order in which those things were to be done, when, and in what order would you do them? Plainly, you would do each the very first opportunity. If it were quite in your power with which you would begin, you would begin with that which seemed the more important; but if the opportunity presented itself first of doing that which seemed to you the less important, you would not refuse to do it, merely lest you should convey to others a false impression as to the relative importance of the two things asked of you.

When we ask the question why should we not baptize infants? our first impression is, that they who object must hold far higher opinions than we as to the importance of the rite. We expect them to say, "This is no ordinary rite, which Christians might use at one time in one form, at another time in another." This is a sacrament in which we must not deviate a hair's breadth from the form in which the Apostles administered it. In their time the majority of those who received it were of adult age. We dare not venture, therefore, now to confer it on children. In the Apostles' days it was ordinarily administered by immersion. We dare not venture to think that sprinkling will suffice. We care not that all Christians may have baptized for hundreds of years, only in the way that you think lawful, we cannot admit the smallest deviation from what we believe to be primitive usage." When men, I say,

treat our baptism as null, and insist on our repeating it, it is natural to think that in their estimation baptism is an important thing, and that they would not endeavour, for any trifling matter, to revolutionize the practice of Christendom. But when these men come to explain themselves, we find that they are actuated, not by an undue sense of the importance of baptism, but by a fear lest it should be thought too important. It is said that if a man has been baptized before he believes, he is in danger of lifting baptism into a saving ordinance, and of overlooking that he is saved by believing, and not by baptism, and that the only way to prevent this is to maintain that no man has a right to be baptized until he is saved first. Well, in answer to this I would recur to the illustration I have just employed. If a friend has asked us to do two things, we should not show much love to him if we postponed indefinitely the performance of one of them, solely in order to testify our conviction that it was less important than the other. And we shall not do well if we think compliance with God's commands a less urgent matter than the establishment of man's theories. If our Master, Christ, has given us two commands, we show little love to Him if we neglect opportunities, and put off the performance of one of them in order to testify our sense of their relative importance.

You will see, I think, from what has been said that we are not required to bring proofs of the lawfulness of Infant Baptism. Christ having confessedly instituted Baptism, and ordered his Apostles by that rite to make disciples of all people,

the burden lies with those who would place restrictions on it, to give the proofs which justify such restrictions. The text is introduced in words of the widest generality, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." If any say that there are some to whom Baptism cannot fitly be administered, let them give the Scripture proofs that it was our Lord's will that such persons should be excluded. In particular, if it is asserted that our children may not be brought into covenant relation with Him, let the text be produced where He has forbidden children to come to Him. This is what our opponents are in fairness obliged to do; and if it were the case that they failed to do so because Scripture was completely silent, nothing more would be necessary in order to establish at least the lawfulness of Infant Baptism.

But we go further, and maintain that this mode of using the sacrament is most conformed to the mind of our Lord Himself, because He has not only not forbidden us to bring our children unto Him, but encouraged us to do so. In His own lifetime the very question arose about which we now dispute. I think if the Bible had not told us how our Lord dealt with it we should have been uncertain how He would have acted. Remember how our Lord was pressed by those who thronged to hear the gracious words that proceeded from His lips. We read of the multitude coming together, so that they could not so much as eat bread. We read of our Lord commanding that a small ship should wait on Him, and of His teaching the multitude out of the ship while they stood on the land.

We are told that He committed to His disciples the merely ministerial offices of His religion, and that He Himself baptised not, but his disciples. And now does it seem easy to determine how He would act when His teaching was interrupted by parents who brought to Him children of an age incapable of profiting by His instructions? St. Luke describes these children as babes—*βρέφη*. The Apostles, we know, concluded that these infants were unable to benefit by the presence of our Lord, and rebuked those who brought them to Him. And were we less familiar with the history, might it not seem likely to ourselves also, that their Master would rebuke the superstition of parents who interrupted His teaching by asking Him to put His hands upon these children, and who imagined that these unconscious babes could profit by His touch? But we are told that when He saw the disciples repel these children He was much displeased; and not only did He take these children in His arms and bless them, as it had been desired, but He made what was done in their case into a general rule. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

Well has this history been chosen as the Gospel for the service of Infant Baptism, for it contains by anticipation an answer to every difficulty that can be raised by any who would repel us from bringing our children to the same Saviour who received these children then. We cannot doubt that these parents then did well in bringing their children to Him. We cannot doubt that the chil-

dren whom He took in His arms, and whom He blessed, did receive precious benefit from that blessing, unconscious though they were. Yet if any were to ask us to define the nature of that benefit, we should find it quite as hard a problem as to define the nature of baptismal grace. We have no warrant for saying that every child who received that blessing was certain of obtaining eternal salvation, or that he walked this world, signed and sealed in the sight of all men, as a certain inheritor of eternal glory. We cannot say that he enjoyed any special immunity from temptation. We do not even know for certain that every one of these children grew up to know the Gospel, and to be admitted into the visible Church of Christ. For these children disappear out of the Scripture narrative, and our curiosity as to their subsequent history has been ungratified. Yet, assuredly, any of these children who came in after life to know the Saviour's work, and to believe on Him and love Him, would cherish, as a privilege of unspeakable value, the knowledge that he had in infancy been taken into his Master's arms and received His gracious blessing. And if asked to name the first beginning of his union with Christ, I doubt not that he would not so much think of that time, when with his own conscious intellect and affections he took hold of the Saviour, as rather think of that earlier time when hands he knew not took hold on him, and love, unearned by deserts of his, embraced him : the love of Him of whom we must all confess, " We love Him, because **He** first loved us." However this may be,

from the history of our Lord's receiving these infants we learn these two things : first, that infants are not incapable of receiving a blessing from Him; and, secondly, that whatever difficulties we may have in theorizing as to the nature of that blessing, it may not the less be a very real one, and that our duty to seek it for those we love may be very clear.

But it remains to notice a difficulty which some have found in the verse chosen for my text. It consists of two parts—a promise and a threat. Now, while the promise mentions two things, belief and baptism, the threat mentions only one—"He that believeth not shall be damned." Hence it is urged that belief is the one and only indispensable requisite to salvation. And since an infant is incapable of belief, it is impossible that he can be in a state of salvation. But if this be so, what then becomes of those infants who die before they are old enough to learn the Saviour's name? Must Christian parents, mourning over babes untimely snatched away, have the bitterer grief to know that they are eternally separated from their little ones? Must they think of their buds of promise as blighted for ever by some cold, unfriendly blast, and not as blossoms early culled by a tender Father's hand? But there is no more fruitful source of error than to found a system of doctrine on a single text, without regarding how that text is modified by other statements of Scripture. In the present case few have any difficulty in seeing that the general statement, "He that believeth not shall be damned," is modified by our know-

ledge that God does not demand impossibilities, and that He does not require belief of those who are incapable of believing. I have the less need to argue the matter, because I believe our opponents have no more fears than ourselves for the safety of those little ones whom God removed in infancy.

But now arises the deeper question—On what grounds can we have good hopes of the safety of such children? Are we to rest our hopes on their innocence? Are we to say that, having committed no actual sin, they have a natural right to salvation, that they have no need of a Saviour, and must be safe independently of anything Christ has done or suffered? If any maintain this, I can only say such is not the doctrine that the Christian Church has always taught. She has always held that all who enter heaven, even though they may not have sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, are saved, not by right of their own innocence, but for the sake of Christ. The doctrine taught in the Ninth Article of our Church is no modern invention of hers, but has been handed down to her from primitive times, and, as we believe, can be proved by Scripture and by experience.

We hold that there are in every child of fallen Adam tendencies to evil, which only require time and opportunity to ripen into act, and that this corruption of nature constitutes him in whom it exists a sinner in God's sight, and does need to be pardoned. For this reason we regard it as no idle ceremony to

dedicate our children to Christ, and claim for them a part in that salvation which He has declared His willingness to give. We ground our assured trust for them, not in the innocence of their years, but in the fact that there is no impediment to their being united to Christ, and being thus made inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. As a matter of fact, there is seldom any difficulty in acknowledging the propriety of Infant Baptism wherever the doctrine of Original Sin is strongly held: and it was in the ardour of controversy against the Pelagians, who denied Original Sin, that the absolute necessity of baptism was asserted more strongly than it had ever been before. And I may add, that anyone who believes that there are in fallen man tendencies to evil antecedent to their outward manifestation, has no difficulty in admitting it to be possible that tendencies to good, implanted by grace, may also be long antecedent to their outward manifestation.

Before I conclude, it remains for me to notice two objections that have been made to the teaching of the Church of England on the subject of baptism. One is that experience proves that her doctrine is wrong, because all who have been baptized do not turn out well. Much has been said as to the absurdity of supposing that thieves, and drunkards, and harlots are members of Christ and children of God, or of seeking for inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven in the jail or at the gallows. Stripped of all rhetorical amplification, the argument is an attempt to prove that all who are baptized are not ultimately saved. But, surely,

it is incumbent on every disputant to try to know something of the opinions of his opponents. Who imagines that anyone, Roman Catholic or Protestant, holds the doctrine that every baptized child is saved? No one dreams that baptism confers any privileges incapable of being lost, or which must result in the eternal salvation of him who receives them. The question at issue, then, is merely this : Is it possible that those who are not finally saved ever can have been partakers of any spiritual privileges? Now to this question there can be but one answer. Those who hold most strongly the doctrine of the final perseverance of the elect do also acknowledge that there may be strivings of God's Spirit with those who are not elect, and who do not persevere, strivings which for a time seem to be successful. There are those whom our Lord describes as receiving the Word with joy, and as believing for a while, but yet who do not endure to the end, and in time of temptation fall away. There are those whom His Apostle describes as having been once enlightened, as having tasted of the heavenly gift, and as having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and yet as falling away. It has seemed strange to some how it is that St. Augustine and some of our great reformers who took him for their chief guide, should, on the other hand, have spoken so highly of baptismal privileges as to be claimed with confidence as holding the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; and, on the other hand, have taught doctrines akin to those which in later times were called Calvinistic. And

the explanation is, that the holding these latter doctrines is quite compatible with the full recognition of the fact that high privileges may be enjoyed by those who are not elect, and who do not persevere to the end. Those, then, in our Church who rate highest the privileges conferred by baptism are not in the least embarrassed by the fact that all do not retain these privileges to the end; for from the first they warned their people not to imagine that the possession of such privileges must necessarily terminate in their salvation. All the privileges which members of the Christian Church enjoy may be paralleled in the history of the Jewish Church. And so with a special reference to this subject St. Paul has taught us: "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. But with many of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now, these things were our examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

But in the last place it is objected that the doctrine of the Church of England deprives her clergy of all power to rebuke sin; for how, it is said, can they stand up in their pulpits and say to their congregations—"Ye must be born again, when their formularies teach that their hearers have all already been born again in baptism.

Now, certainly it is evident that the exhortation, "Ye must be born again," is one which, from its

nature, cannot be addressed to a congregation indiscriminately; for unless a person can be born again several times we are not justified in saying "Ye must be born again" to those who may have been born again already. And we frankly confess that the Church of England disposes her clergy to address their congregations not as still in their natural state, children of wrath, but as those who have some portion in Christ, and have, through Him, become children of God. I need not look to her teaching about baptism to prove this; it is the character of all her services. The clergyman begins her daily service by addressing his people as dearly beloved *brethren*. He goes on to exhort them in deep humility to make confession of their sins, yet he teaches them to address Him from whose ways they have strayed as their Almighty and Most Merciful *Father*. He asks them to join him in the prayer which our Lord Himself taught His people, in which He gives us a right to address God as our Father, and the whole service proceeds in this tone. But have our clergy on this account less power to warn, to threaten, and rebuke sinners? What, if we find a prodigal who has wasted his substance in riotous living, and whose soul is perishing with hunger in a country far from his true home, have we lost our power to rebuke him for his sin, and to warn him of the ruin that is his certain fate if he remain where he is; have we lost, I say, this power if we address to him the exhortation, "Arise and go to thy *Father*?" Nay, is it not in this word *Father* that our strength lies? Is it not this which banishes despair, and makes

the sinner know that He whom He has abandoned will welcome his return.

Assuredly, brethen, God's way of dealing with the sinner is different from that which man would deem prudent. Good men have thought that the cause of morality would be lost if we taught that God conferred His pardon on any who had not first earned it by consistent obedience. Others, less disposed to insist on outward good works, still suppose that we must lose all power to deal with a sinner if we allow him to think that God has conferred on him any privileges before his inward state of mind is such as seems to them worthy of those privileges. But God's method is freely to give to those who are unworthy, and by His gifts themselves to make them worthy. And His ministers find that exhortations addressed to men's gratitude for what they have already received, and pointing out the responsibility which such gifts involve, are quite as powerful as exhortations addressed to men's hope of receiving benefits when they have done something to deserve them. And if those who are already walking worthy of their vocation, and bringing forth fruits corresponding to union with Christ, are asked to date the commencement of their union with Him, though it would gratify the pride of their nature to name the time when they had done something for Him, or when, with conscious intellect and affection, they first took hold of Him; yet they will find their love to Him drawn out more fully by thinking rather how before they themselves had done anything, He who first loved them embraced them with the arms

of His mercy, and made them heirs of His salvation.

Brethren, I have spoken to you on a subject on which there is confessedly diversity of opinion among members of our Church; nor can I suppose that every one of my statements will be assented to by all who hear me. But the amount of our disagreements must not be exaggerated; for on the most essential points there is a perfect agreement amongst us. We all believe that it is a lawful thing to bring our children to Christ, and from their earliest years to dedicate them to His service. We believe that He has not only not forbidden us, but encouraged us to do so. We believe that when we comply with His ordinance it would be an insult to His promise to suppose that the prayer of faith would not be attended with a blessing. And if there be any difference amongst us in defining the nature of that blessing, or as to the name by which it may be most fitly described, all agree that baptismal privileges avail nothing to him who is not united to Christ by a lively faith. Brethren, if you, in whose name a profession of faith in Christ was made in infancy, believe not on Him; if you, for whom it was promised that you should keep His Commandments, disregard His will; if you, for whom it was promised that you should renounce sin, are the willing slaves of sin, more tolerable will it be in the Day of Judgment for those who have never heard the Saviour's name.



